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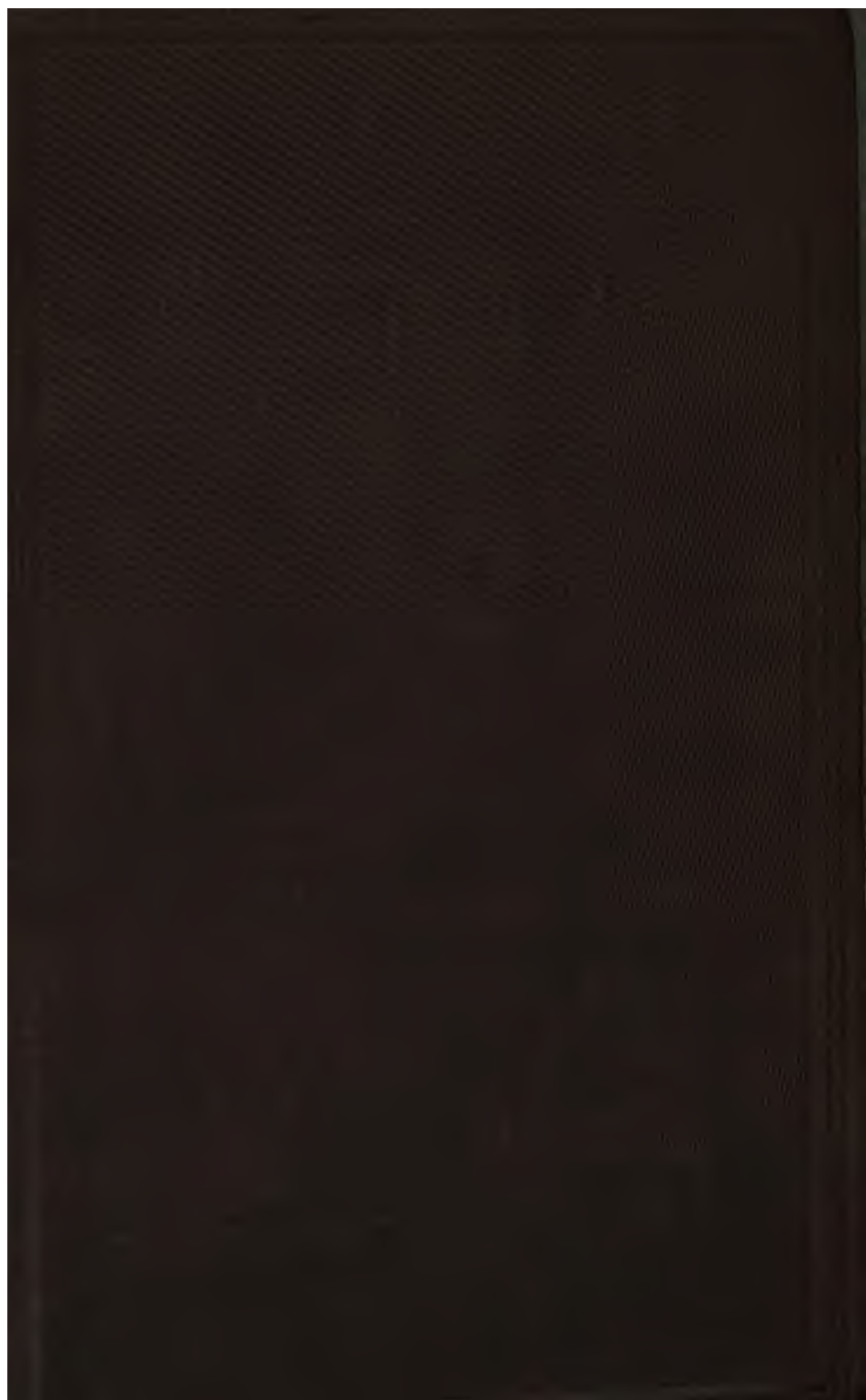
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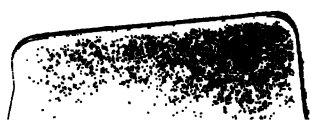
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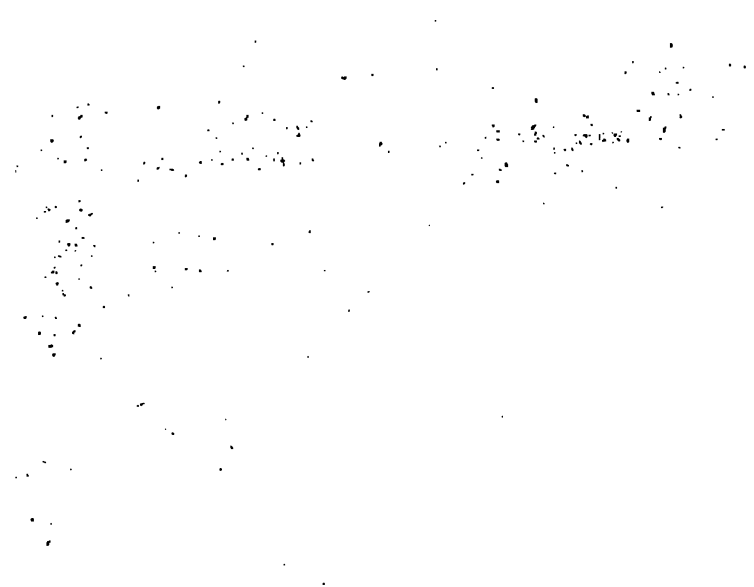
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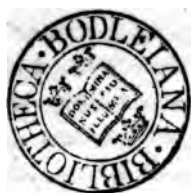
A
PARTING MEMORIAL

OF
HIS MINISTRY.

BY
THE REV. HENRY GREY, D.D.,
MINISTER OF FREE ST. MARY'S, EDINBURGH,
AUTHOR OF "SERMONS ON THE DUTY AND DESIRABLENESS OF FREQUENT COMMUNION," &c. &c.

LONDON:
T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

MDCCLXVIII.



TO THE

Congregation of Free St Mary's,

*With the Elders and Deacons, and to Friends at large, to whom I
formerly stood in the Pastoral Relation.*

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—Many signs admonish me that the time of our separation is at hand. Our Sabbath seasons, our times of Holy Communion, with the varied and endearing intercourse of common life, long enjoyed, will ere long be spoken of among things that are past. In this view a wish dwells in my heart to leave with you some memorial of these times and of the ties which Providence formed betwixt us; casting our lot, first as contemporaries, then as fellow-travelers through different periods of life's journey, and finally, giving to our connexion a sacred and important bearing on the life that lies beyond.

I have reason to think with joy of many with whom I have been so associated: some whom I shall rejoice to leave carrying out their term of service here below, while a far greater number have preceded me, called at different stages from the ranks: and, lingering among the last, my office of late years has often been to watch over, to part with, and to follow to the grave, those who were a while ago our fellow-worshippers, but have already entered into their rest.

It is not, therefore, with the friends of my youth that I now leave tokens of remembrance, for these are already gone, or are preparing, like myself, for an early departure. But as

in the providence of God, the generations of men overlap each other, connecting us in early life with those who began their race before, and in old age with those who continue after us, there are still some to receive our parting words, to remember seasons interesting to the soul, of prosperity or affliction, experienced by them or spoken of by their fathers, and to bear up and carry on the chain of descending influences that connect the existing race with the race that went before, and with those that follow after. Words spoken are of brief duration. Those laid up in books share also in our mortality, and perish faster often than photographic likenesses, or than the names inscribed on our tombstones. It is not anything of ours, spoken or written, that can make good a claim to preservation or perpetuity; but that which is the Lord's—the good impressions He may have made, the words from His record which He has rivetted on the conscience, the influence transmitted by character, speech, or example, that bears the trace of His hand, and of the blessing He is pleased to impart to any agency He adopts for the prosecution of His work. These are *His own*: we can yield Him only what was His before. And if I may prolong or revive for a season what remains of these good influences, if I may recall the *memory*, or in any degree the *glow*, of early affection—if I might obtain from you a pledge, given in the secrecy of the heart, that you will be all and wholly *for Christ*, and that in parting we shall meet again, you and your children with you, where He calls us to be *with Him* for ever—then blessed will be the interval of our separation, happy the commission given to these closing words, and joyful the congratulations that will attend our reunion in the presence of the Lord.

My personal friends are aware that the press has not in time past been my temptation. The circumstances of our times act according to a man's talents or temperament, as an obstacle or an incentive to publication. The multitude of writers, and the prevalent appetite for books, stir up naturally, in men of fertile parts and literary taste, an emulation to share in this form of usefulness; while, again, the brief regard and the rapid dismissal attending works which would be deemed of merit were it their lot to stand *alone* in the field—the crowd of these that, from a brief limited existence, are rapidly posting to oblivion—the little chance left of saying anything *new*, or, if some fresh thoughts or views are given, of having them uttered before others better known, or in a better position for being heard, have seized and brought them out—above all, the stores of unrivalled theological literature that live stereotyped in our tongue and in our shelves, with the activity of our age in reproducing and readapting gems from this mine, have checked in me the rising impulse, and taught me, enjoying the affluence without aspiring to add to it, to cleave more closely to the sphere of duty that seemed marked out as more appropriately mine.

And much cause have I to acknowledge the condescending mercy of a heavenly Father in continuing with me, through so long a course of years, the means of access to my fellow-sinners by the spoken word and the living voice, making up to me as by a lengthened term for an originally limited endowment of strength and power, while many around me, more eminent in name and achievement, have finished their work and been withdrawn from this earthly scene. Nor has my place been appointed, like that of some of my fellow-

labourers, in distant inhospitable stations—not among the brutishly ignorant, either of our own or of foreign lands, nor yet, to any extent, among the classes perversely enlightened or licentiously refined. I have not been honoured to engage in apostolic work, to carry the gospel where it was not known; but wherever called to prescribed labour, there never failed a band of Christian brethren to bid me welcome. These have borne me up with their continual prayers, have cheered me under discouragement and depression, and, by kind and genial influence, have enlarged my sphere and opened my way to new opportunities, and to occasional efforts in various parts of the United Kingdom and of the sister Island.

It becomes me, in putting off my armour, to join my testimony to that of multitudes gone before, that I have served a gracious Master, who sends none a warfare on their own charges, and who takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. If trials and disappointments form part of the allotment of the Christian minister—if there occur in his experience seasons of heaviness through manifold temptations, times of weakness and fear, these serve to bring him acquainted with the abundant consolations and exhaustless resources to which he has access in the Saviour, and which are found *best, or only*, “in the time of need.” Blessed to him that is cast down, is the strength given in weakness, the guidance in perplexity, the victory after conflict, the preciousness of the reward in souls brought to the Redeemer. There is joy in this tribulation more than the world has in its prosperity. The work carries its wages in it, and becomes endeared in its difficulties as well as in its successes. The grace that was sufficient to sustain the disciples of the first

school, with untiring energy in painfulness and weariness, and that gave them to rejoice in persecutions and distresses, on the cross and on the scaffold, does not fail us for our humbler necessities. Those appointed to the highest things have nothing over, and the least have no lack. These also "drink of the brook by the way," and are satisfied. They do not tire of the service or repent of their first choice. The world has no allurements that could tempt them to seek a new destination or another Master.

It may be I shall not meet the wishes of some of my friends in the selection made of these discourses for publication. They are, it will be observed, separate and miscellaneous in character—of old or more recent date—several of them on prescribed subjects and peculiar occasions, somewhat apart from the regular course of our Sabbath-day instructions. These, you know, have extended over large sections of the sacred books, in expository lectures, and in sermons often forming a continued series of discourses—doctrinal, practical, historical, prophetic, as the subjects, or our former progress in Scripture study, suggested. Some of you may remember the affecting lessons taught us in the Book of Job, and the varied inestimable treasures set before us in the prophecies of Isaiah—in the New Testament, extending over the Gospels, the Acts, most of the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. The discourses on these extensive subjects seemed not adapted to the present purpose, seeing they would be much too voluminous if given entire, and mutilated and imperfect if separated or given out in detached portions. Besides, that, as hinted above, the numerous and admirable treatises, already within reach, on those parts

of Scripture that have formed the staple of my ministrations deter me from publishing on the *Decalogue*, for instance; on the *Beatitudes*; on the *Epistle to the Romans*; on the Old Testament *characters* set forth in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews; or on other portions which were edifying to us as themes for meditation at the time. I have, therefore, preferred selecting a few sermons, more isolated and individual in character, and not depending for completeness or connexion on the order in which they are placed.

Some apology may be due for what may appear a forced or quaint adaptation of a text, in two or three instances. I do not profess to vindicate the liberty thus taken with the plain and direct meaning of words; but as I could plead the example of some eminently useful preachers for occasionally adopting this practice, and have found in my own experience that attention was roused, and that sermons on this plan were honoured to be not ineffective or unfruitful, I have ventured to give some specimens here, trusting that nothing may be found in them inconsistent or contrary to the principles which it should be the aim of all preaching to inculcate.

Believing I shall find from my friends, as I have ever done, a kind and cordial reception for what is good and well-intended, with a candid and liberal construction of imperfections and omissions,—I remain, beloved Christian brethren,

Your faithful and affectionate Pastor and Friend,

HENRY GREY.

EDINBURGH, October 1857.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. CHRIST'S KINGDOM : ITS PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS	11
II. RELIGION PRESIDING OVER HOSPITALITY AND SOCIAL ENJOYMENT	34
III. MEMORABLE TIMES THAT STAND FOR WAY-MARKS IN THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE	54
IV. THE WEeping PENITENT AND THE DISDAÍNFUL PHARISEE	74
V. THE REPROACH OF CHRIST	92
VI. THE MINISTER OF CHRIST	112
VII. THE FORLORN HOPE	135
VIII. THE REFUGE	155
IX. WINTER	171
X. SPRING	185
XI. LIGHT WITHIN DIFFUSES RADIANCE WITHOUT	200
XII. SALT THAT IS GENUINE—SALT THAT IS SALTLESS	216
XIII. SETTING OUT, BUT STOPPING SHORT OF THE PROMISED LAND	232
XIV. THE VISIT AND THE INVITATION	250
XV. CHRIST THE HEAD, THE CHURCH HIS BODY	270
XVI. MAN'S POSITION AND OFFICE IN REFERENCE TO THE ANIMAL CREATION	286
XVII. CHRIST'S ANTIDOTE FOR CAREFULNESS	305
XVIII. THE COUNTRY'S BANE	326
XIX. THE REMEDY AND SUBSTITUTE	341
XX. CESAR'S CLAIMS AND GOD'S CLAIMS	358
XXI. THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM	373
XXII. TIMES OF TRIAL TIMES OF SELF-INSPECTION	392

I.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM: ITS PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS.

PREACHED BEFORE THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY
IN MAY 1836.

"His name shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him : all nations shall call him blessed."—
PSALM lxxii. 17.

IN reading the Scriptures we should ever remember that they were dictated by Him who has the past, present, and future alike open before Him, and who, in all His communications, has had the *eternal salvation of men* for His object, and has still presented to the faith of His children *the same great Author of salvation*. This remembered, in reference to the passage before us, we see at once that "a greater than Solomon is here," and that the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, speaks of Messiah the Prince. To Him, indeed, both Jewish and Christian interpreters are agreed in referring this psalm. The glory of Solomon, however excellent, was a faint shadow of that of Him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person;" the wisdom of Solomon was foolishness compared with the endowments of

Him "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The golden reign of that bright ornament of Israel afforded a feeble emblem of "the unsearchable riches" and infinite blessings of the dispensation "of Christ." The Psalmist declares the perfect righteousness of His administration, the protection it should extend to the poor and oppressed, the subjugation of His enemies, and the progress of His conquests and triumphs, till His glory fill the whole earth, and His name be universally extolled. If these things, seen by the faithful of old through a long vista of intervening ages, filled their minds with joy and praise, how much more should they awaken our admiration, and fire our zeal, and animate our efforts for securing the boundless blessings they present to our hope! From the words before us I would offer a few remarks on the *perpetuity*, the *felicity*, and the *universal extension of the kingdom of Christ*: praying God to make us the subjects of His kingdom, and to accept with favour our efforts for its enlargement.

I. Remark the *perpetuity of Christ's kingdom*, extending from age to age throughout all generations; for it is in connexion with it that "His name shall endure for ever, and be continued as long as the sun." The origin of this kingdom is to be sought in the archives of heaven and the counsels of the Eternal. The Word, which reveals the hidden things of God, intimates that Messiah "was set up from everlasting," that God "chose His people in Christ before the foundation of the world," and "promised them eternal life in Him before the world was." The establishment of His kingdom was a grand and favourite object, from all eternity, in the contemp-

lation of the Divine prescience, and in the purpose of infinite wisdom and love. The promise that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head" presented to mankind a distant view of its blessings; the rite of sacrifice afforded an obscure emblem of that great propitiation by which it was to be established; and the succeeding prophetic communications unfolded its distinctive characters, till, at the era of the gospel, the dawn brightened into day, and "the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing under His wings."

The kingdom of Christ did not appear in the form which vain men had anticipated, with pomp of worldly greatness, like the empires that preceded it, and with the sword of the conqueror bathed in blood. It "came not with observation," because it was of a spiritual and invisible nature; but advanced in the majesty of "truth and meekness and righteousness," establishing itself in the hearts of a willing people, subdued by the gracious power of God. The foundation of this kingdom was laid *in the death of Him who was destined to reign for ever*. This was the awful, stupendous, unprecedented, but glorious means appointed by infinite wisdom to secure His personal exaltation and the redemption of His people. Thus "it became Him to fulfil all righteousness;" thus expiating the guilt of man, He vindicated the righteousness of God, and established the authority of the law of holiness. "By death He overcame him that had the power of death, even the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." In contemplation of the glorious effects to arise from it, our Lord, though fully aware of its awful concomitants, invited its approach; and, like a mighty warrior, hastened to the

battle in confidence of victory. "Now," said He, referring to His approaching sufferings, "now is come the judgment," *the crisis*, "of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out: and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

This, my brethren, was the most interesting era in the world's history. God, who had seemed to neglect the moral government of the earth while He suffered the nations to walk in their own ways, was now to resume His authority, to institute a trial of the human race that should ascertain their real character, and, according as they received or rejected the gospel, to pass a sentence of acquittal or condemnation. That hour of portentous darkness which was to witness the death of Christ was *the moment of the world's fate*; when the battle was to be fought betwixt the Prince of Life and the Prince of Darkness. But Messiah was secure of the victory: He was to overthrow and destroy the dominion of Satan, and, by the attractive power of His cross, to draw all men to Himself. Accordingly He rose, and "ascended up on high, leading captivity captive." Multitudes of converts were brought in from every quarter to grace His ascension and instatement in glory at the Father's right hand, like so many trophies decorating the triumphs of a victorious warrior. As on occasion of a coronation the prison-doors are thrown open, and gifts are lavishly scattered among the populace, so when Christ received His crown of glory, liberty was proclaimed to the captives—a jubilee of gladness to those who had bent and groaned under the yoke of their spiritual adversary. As the sound of the gospel was heard among the nations, the authority of Christ was acknowledged, His standard was resorted to by willing multitudes; while the prince of this

world saw his temples forsaken, his oracles silenced, his terrors despised. In the course of two or three centuries the Roman empire was filled with Christians—many eminent and influential in character, who, amid errors that began to prevail, were prepared to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake, and to lay down their lives in His cause.

And though, at an after period, Satan, transformed into an angel of light, seemed for a season to have succeeded in snatching the reins of empire, and to have regained by craft what he had lost in fair and open conflict; though for some ages the simplicity of the gospel was displaced by encumbering forms of superstitious devotion, and its purity violated by an idolatry and licentiousness rivalling in malignity the enormities of heathenism—still the foundations of Christ's kingdom were unmoved; a remnant were ever preserved to give God glory, and the temporary darkness which obscured the Church ushered in that glorious light which, at the era of the Reformation, surprised the nations. So signal was the power of God, that Luther said he seemed to have nothing to do but to look on. It was the work of God, not of man. The human mind burst from the fetters that had confined it; the terrors of superstition were thrown off; the pretences of self-righteousness were put to shame; and the simple doctrine of the Cross communicated peace and holiness and hope. Since that period the kingdom of Christ has still maintained its authority, advancing with a progress steady if not yet rapid, and receiving from each succeeding age its tribute of converts, its complement of soldiers, trained, by the discipline of their Master's service on earth, for the joys of His presence in heaven. Every day and hour adds to the number of

that army of the Lamb, from which no one who sincerely enlists in it is ever withdrawn. Nor is there anything more sure from the Word of Prophecy than that "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion that which shall not be destroyed." The ordinances of the sun and moon shall fail before He ceases to enlighten the world: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord."

Where are the *mighty monarchies of the ancient world*—the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian—that seemed to have taken deep root in the earth, and, matured by ages of vigour, to bid fair for perpetuity? Even the more modern States of Greece and Rome have undergone a complete change, and their ancient characters are sought in vain in the regions they once emblazoned with glory. Nor has *the higher and less vulgar authority of wisdom and legislation been more stable*. The schools of ancient philosophy have passed away, and the tenets of their sages have solved for us none of the hard questions suggested by reason and conscience: one great name after another dies from the memory of fleeting generations, as the stars fade with the rising morn. Religion itself, which, even when perverted, takes the firmest hold of the human mind, has not in any form, save that which the name of the Saviour consecrates and redeems, been able to resist the subduing power of time. Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad, of the Acropolis and of the Pantheon? If there be any systems of religion that boast a more extended duration—as, perhaps, the idolatries of China and Hindostan, or the impostures of Mohammed—these owe their

continuance only to the semi-barbarous condition of the countries where they prevail, to the apathy and dulness of intellect which they foster, to the suppression of research and inquiry, and to the absence of those awakening anticipations with which Christianity stimulates the mind to the investigation of truth, and fixes its aspirations on the perfection and blessedness of immortality. Their own essential characters convict them of utter instability. The light of knowledge and of sound philosophy at once exposes their falsehood and absurdity; and before the Word of Power, addressing us from heaven, they fall prostrate, like Dagon before the ark. If for a time they are suffered to remain for the conviction and humiliation of the world, and to maintain a seeming competition with Christianity, it is only to render their final overthrow more illustriously demonstrative of the power of God. We know from the Word of Prophecy that all these empires, with their systems of opinion, and delusions of false religion, "shall be broken together, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor carried by the wind, and no place found for them;" while the kingdom that owns the God of heaven for its sovereign shall never be destroyed, but, having consumed all adversaries, shall stand for ever.

II. Remark *the felicity of this kingdom*: "men shall be blessed in Him." Whatever blessings have descended on the human race since the fall, have been communicated through the mediation of Christ; for thus only, we are taught, can a holy God have friendly intercourse with man. But the blessings that specially mark His kingdom are *of a spiritual*

nature, and can be rightly estimated only by a spiritual mind.

You, my brethren, who have felt the poison of sin and the anguish of a wounded spirit, but, like the Israelite deriving a cure from the brazen serpent, have found salvation in the cross, say how precious the Saviour is, and how vast and invaluable His blessings. Say whether, even in the present life, acquaintance with Him does not impart a "peace that passeth understanding," a joy the world knows not of, a hope full of immortality. And if, in this imperfect state, you find in Jesus a secure and abounding bliss, what shall be your inheritance in Him in that better world, where He shall discover all His love, and unfold the yet untasted fulness of His salvation! "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

After looking at eternal things it may seem of little moment to notice those subordinate blessings which the gospel scatters over the present life, and, out of its exuberant fulness, extends even to those who are far from individually yielding it the submission of their hearts; for none, I think, deny that the propagation of Christianity has, in an incalculable degree, meliorated the present condition of man. It has suppressed, in the countries where it has established itself, many odious crimes universally tolerated in the ancient heathen world; it has put an end to many forms of cruelty that still prevail, in unmitigated ferocity, where the gospel is unknown—has improved the laws and manners of com-

munities—has softened the habits and sweetened the intercourse of social life, so that the friends of humanity know that they cannot in any way promote its interests so effectually as by extending the kingdom of Christ. It is only by the authority thence derived, and the grace so dispensed, that the lawless passions of men can be effectually restrained, and peace and righteousness, mutual sympathy and genuine benevolence, become the law and character of mankind.

III. Remark *the destined universal extension of the kingdom of Christ*: “all nations shall call Him blessed.” And why, asks the infidel, was not this kingdom, and the revelation that makes it known, universal from the beginning? Why did the God of the whole earth confine His favour for many ages to the descendants of Abraham, and, leaving other nations in darkness, restrict the light of heaven to the little province of Judea? Is it to be believed that, overlooking and despising the great, populous, enlightened empires of the ancient world, He expended all His treasures on a people remarkable only for a bigoted and exclusive superstition? Is this system of favouritism worthy the Sovereign of the universe, the Father of mankind? Similar arguments are brought against Christianity; for though not restricted by any Divine limitation to a select portion of the human family, but professedly, and by its characteristic genius, designed for all the posterity of Adam, it has in fact, as yet, extended to but a part of what the Scriptures call “the isles of the Gentiles”—descendants of Japheth—and has been again supplanted, or grossly corrupted, in the regions where it first took root, and spread itself in the tents of Shem, the most

honoured offspring of Noah—so that, at present, it comprehends hardly a third part of the human race.

My brethren, in answer to these questions, whether captiously or conscientiously proposed, opposite inquiries may be suggested ; and to meet the subject with any profit to ourselves, we must admit the inviolable sovereignty and wisdom, beyond our penetration, of all the proceedings of the Almighty Ruler, who is not to be summoned before the tribunal of human intellect, of an understanding not merely finite, but betrayed by the bias of those partial and self-interested feelings that interfere with all its decisions on a point in which each finds himself personally involved. Was God, we may ask, under any obligation to restore to man the blessings he had voluntarily forfeited? Was there any necessity compelling Him to give His Son to die for a lost race, or to renew, by repeated communications, and at so many different periods, the assurance of this mercy? While just, and equitable, and beneficent, in his whole administration, He claims a righteous sovereignty, and the free exercise of His prerogative of mercy, in the distribution of unmerited favour. If any one object to the different degrees of privilege conferred upon different nations or individuals, we can only answer in the words of the apostle, "*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*" "Unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." We cannot by prying dive into reasons placed beyond the sphere of our understanding, or make ourselves counsellors of Him who giveth none account of His matters.

But not to insist on arguments which, it may be said, are fitted to silence rather than satisfy, it is an important fact,

never to be forgotten, that Divine revelation was originally universal, without limitation or selection, commensurate with the necessity that called it forth ; none of the progeny of Adam being exempted from the promise of a Redeemer who should bruise the serpent's head, given to our first parents as a sacred trust for the benefit of mankind, nor more limited than the institution of the Sabbath, or access to the tree of life, in the state of primary blessedness. The rite of sacrifice, so early instituted to confirm and illustrate this promise, was of no restricted application, but was equally appropriate to the use and circumstances of all. The knowledge of these prominent facts, with the addition of the miraculous preservation of Noah, and of the covenant made with him, was communicated to the descendants of that patriarch, as the inheritance of the human race. The truths embodied in these facts were designed to regulate the faith, worship, and hopes of all mankind ; and, had they been faithfully preserved, the blessings of the true religion would have been in every man's possession. It was the careless forgetfulness of these things, and the wilful preference of darkness to light, that introduced idolatry and wickedness into the world. If Divine revelation was not universal in ancient times, those who incurred the loss must bear the blame. If its light has been withdrawn from any region where once it shone, the advantages that have been abused, and the privileges that have been frustrated, remove all charge of unfaithfulness or inconsistency from the Dispenser of blessings. The righteous laws of an infallible government have never been departed from. Sin has been visited with chastisement ; crime has met its retribution : but entire desertion and abandonment have been the

allotment only of an unbroken course of declension, corruption, and apostasy. And if Divine revelation bear to this day the character of a limited benefaction, embracing and excluding different portions of mankind, does not the reproach that attaches to this state of things fall with particular force on us who have so long had the peculiar guardianship of the gospel treasury? For though the promise declared that "all nations should be blessed in Him," though the Saviour's parting command enjoined that His "gospel should be preached to all the world and to every creature," have His disciples as yet acquitted themselves of the charge assigned to them in the realisation of this purpose? If the gospel be not universal, who, we ask, are answerable for this loss? where falls the blame of this delinquency? To whom did Christ commit the prosecution of His affairs? Has He forsaken the earth since His bodily presence was withdrawn from it? or has He left Himself other agents and representatives to fulfil His will in it, than the living band of faithful witnesses and true adherents that every age enlists to His standard, and identifies with His cause?

But how was it that the work of evangelising the world, so rapid and overflowing in the apostolic age, came so soon to a stand? How was it that the progress of the Reformation, at first so bright and victorious, met so early an impassable barrier? The work to be done seemed, in both cases, as interesting and important as that already accomplished. Did God, in the exercise of inscrutable sovereignty, forbear working; and His Spirit, prematurely and without notice, withdraw His influence? How is it that the productiveness of our days bears so little proportion to the achieve-

ments of times past? that no new countries are now embraced within the pale of Christendom; nor ever a province or a principality won from the dominion of Antichrist to the companionship of the true Church? How comes it that a day of the ministrations of St Paul, and a year of his journeyings—and, again, that the prolific labours and electric light shot abroad in Luther's time, seem to embrace the work of a thousand years of our ordinary attainments? It may be possible, my brethren, to account, in some degree, for these extreme inequalities in the vibrations of the spiritual pendulum, but not, I fear, without extreme depreciation of one period in comparison with another. The Christian community, too willing to find repose and enjoyment in the world, when released from persecution and alarm, and settled in its own honourable and capacious domain, has tired too soon of effort that seemed impelled by no external necessity, and has relaxed into an all but idle exercise of intellect in the development of those nice distinctions that have severed the Church by more than geographical barriers, and have consumed its strength, exhausted its charity, and absorbed or crippled the zeal that should have spread its vigorous arms to embrace new and distant enterprises. The human heart is not more inaccessible, the superstitions of the Gentile nations are not more rivetted, than in former times; neither are the weapons given to our hands, or the resources placed at our disposal, less effective than in the earlier ages of the Church. The thing we want, to bring us back to the position in which the apostles left their undertaking, and to carry on what they committed to the generations coming after them, is the simplicity of faith, the fervour of charity,

the intense reliance placed on the arm of the Lord, that were thrown into their work, and that wrought simultaneously with the Spirit on the hearts of those that heard them, making the inspired word "the power of God" to the thousands that then received it. The commission given to them is continued with us—the promises that supported them are those we rest upon—the purposes of God wait on us still for their accomplishment; and those to whom He commits the fulfilment of His will, are no other than the reclaimed sinners who, like us, have passed from death into life, who stand obedient to His call, who are ready to start to any service in which His interests demand their activity. And what encouragements present themselves even from the inertia and deadness of former times! The work is left to us, pressed upon us, appointed for us; we cannot by any fair movement or deduction shift it off, or withdraw from the cogent claims with which it forces itself upon us.

We see the fig-tree put forth its leaves, and we know that summer is nigh. So, by the light of Scripture, and the consenting judgment of all who view human affairs through its medium, we know that we are far advanced in the third era of the world's duration—in the progress of the dispensation scripturally designated "*the last time*." In this, as in the former periods, the last stage will probably be the most crowded with incidents, the most enriched with animating expectations. Prospects open, and events thicken, as the vessel draws to her port; as the well-sustained conflict closes at last in victory. There is much to be done, many and mighty works to be achieved, and limited time for their performance. All means will soon be required; all hearts, all

energy, all prayer. God will doubtless fulfil His declared purposes : His affairs will not linger, whoever works or forbears working. He will lack no suitable instruments : the exigencies of the times will be the means of forming and calling them into activity. It is no presumption now to say, that the Church's wilderness-state is fast drawing to a close ; that the twelve hundred and sixty days assigned to Antichrist and the false prophet, are nearly summed up. The tenth part of the city has, we apprehend, long since fallen : the mystical beast has experienced rueful shocks, and rallying more feebly from each encounter, drags out a languishing being, that waits, for its final catastrophe, only the manhood of the Church's offspring, the matured resources of the Mighty Conqueror, who is destined ere long to " consume him with the breath of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming." The ten horns of the Apocalyptic Beast, corresponding with the feet and toes of the Chaldean image, " part of iron and part of clay," denoting the clustering States of the Western Roman Empire, which, though disunited, and at strife, have been strong for a season in some of their feudal dynasties, giving their power and strength to the beast—are crumbling to decay. Formed of perishable and incongruous materials, comprising in them the seeds of dismemberment and dissolution, we see them in our own times shaken with a breath, trembling for existence, doomed to irrecoverable overthrow in the shock of that last entire European-Asiatic revolution—the " earthquake" spoken of after the pouring out of the seventh vial in the sixteenth chapter of Revelation—" such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so

great"—whose work is to shatter and break in pieces the frame and bulwarks of these apostate ungodly powers, and scatter their wreck to the four winds of heaven.

Glorious will be the fruits of this event, though harsh the concussion and severe the conflict. The purposes of the Most High will then find room for their development. Smit-ten as by an invisible hand, these implements of the dragon's rule will prove their own destroyers; and, perishing under the weight of their own corruption, will leave their kingdom to no new race of human conquerors: for during their days God has been preparing and setting up a kingdom that shall never be moved; destined not, like theirs, to advancement and decay, to a period of glory and afterwards of decline and dissolution; but, formed for immortal duration, it shall establish itself on the ruins of all the usurpations that have preceded it. Rising in inherent majesty, the stone cut without hand will strengthen and extend, wide as the limits of nature's boundary, far as sin has diffused its poison, or Satan's armoury tried the temper of the human soul. The mountain of the Lord will be seen in those days overtopping the mountains, filling the spacious earth with the amplitude of its dimensions, gathering the multitude of the nations around an undivided throne, and binding them together in one holy, glorious, imperishable empire.

How blessed the description of those days, when "the mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills righteousness;" when all the governments of the world shall harmonise with the Supreme, and be like that of heaven, righteous, equitable, and merciful; when the groaning and travailing earth shall be released from her bondage, and the

rod of the oppressor broken ! The righteous shall flourish in these days. The distinctive characters of Christ's supremacy appear in the consolations promised, the reiterated assurances given, to the poor and needy : " He shall judge the poor of the people ; he shall save the children of the needy." In the plenitude of His power, when " all kings fall down before Him, and all nations serve Him," His high achievement is, that " He delivereth the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Fetters shall not then be wrought out of the Christian intelligence and civilisation of one zone to entrap the unwary simplicity, and enslave the generations of another. Under that rule will be found no bewildering inconsistencies, no hollow deceitful virtues, no specious or splendid crimes. " The children shall all be taught of God ;" and, midst overflowing peace, the happiness of each shall fill up the measure of the joy of all. None shall rejoice at another's expense, or hold advantages bought by the blood and tears of his fellow.

It becomes us to deal humbly and often silently with unfulfilled prophecy, the revelations of God not being designed to make us prophets. We cannot fully discern the times and the seasons till the events disclose them. We know not what time is yet to elapse, or what agitating changes may intervene, between the period marked out by chronological landmarks, and the consummation of the Divine purpose in the full establishment of Emmanuel's glorious reign. But enough is set before us to stimulate our heartiest zeal, and to quicken our hopes to warmest enthusiasm. The fulfilment even of the Church's highest wishes cannot be very far distant ; and the motto of the individual Christian is

still, as in the days of our Lord and His apostles—" Watch and be ready, the Lord is at hand."

It is interesting to our feelings, and it should certainly have a powerful effect in stimulating our exertions, to reflect, *how large a portion of this work naturally devolves on our native land.* Though small in geographical extent, this island holds concentrated within its shores a large portion of the power and energy of the Christian Church. We have long enjoyed the purest light of the Reformation. Liberty, civil and religious, has obtained, by many struggles, a firmer and ampler maturity of growth among us, than in any other country. It has been nourished up, strengthened, and matured, under the fostering care of Providence, by many an arduous conflict, by many an effort of various result: it has sustained many a harsh experiment on its strength; has had its seasons of toilsome exertion and painful discipline; its periods of renovating strength and prosperous repose. But, for a century and a half, it has had a firm establishment in our land. While in many other countries, even in the Christian world, the minds of men have been darkened by superstition, fettered by intolerance, overawed in all their exertions by the terrors of persecution; while those who have loved the truth have groped their way amid the entanglements of error, and, instead of being able to extend their assistance to their brethren of mankind, have been held in bondage and in fear; we have, for many years, sat in undisturbed security, in the enjoyment of a high, if not a perfect measure of religious liberty. And for what purpose has the invaluable blessing been bestowed? Why has it been so carefully nursed and matured by Providence? Not

surely to inflate our pride in our national elevation ; not that we should waste our powers in domestic contests for superiority of opinion, or dissipate our strength in debating about the minute subdivisions of sect and party ; not that we should rend in pieces the seamless coat of Christ, or dismember truth by subtle disputations or microscopic differences, magnified into disproportionate importance, but for a far nobler and more important purpose—that we may hold up an ensign to be seen from afar among the nations—that we may scatter the gospel treasure wide as our commerce extends, or our arms have reached, wherever the British name has been heard, or British influence felt. All our hands, employed with all their might, are but too few. Reinforcements are wanted of every denomination, and that Church deserves not the name of Christian, that would hold back from its share in this honourable department of Christian duty.

And rich is the reward attendant on the work of the Lord : “ He that watereth shall be watered himself.” Missionary undertakings naturally exercise a beneficial influence upon the Churches that engage in them. They compel us to distinguish between the mere externals of religion and its essentials—between that which only accompanies, and that which really constitutes it. In entering upon them, we must, obviously, fix our regard upon the great principles and essential requirements of the gospel, leaving external regulations to be determined by the condition and habits of those who may embrace it. It cannot, I think, be doubted, that in the happy period when true religion shall have a wide or universal prevalence, the Church will be more distinguished by

harmony of doctrine, and fervour of charity, than by sameness of external regulations. The Episcopal and Presbyterian, the Independent and Methodist forms of Church administration, may possibly run parallel with the duration of the Church on earth, insinuating themselves more or less readily as they are found to accord with the national customs or civil governments of the countries into which Christianity is introduced; but no community of Christians, and least of all any Established Church, however well organised and consolidated in the country where it has had its origin, can expect to transport the platform of its arrangements across the world, or to plant representative daughters formed precisely on its model on the banks of the Ganges or the St Lawrence. Our National Churches are the production of centuries. They have been evolved, by a gradual process, out of events and circumstances that can never again occur in the same connexion; are interwoven with the fabric of our civil history, and stand connected with our national and insular peculiarities. As easily might we convey all that belongs to our character and to our modes of thinking as a nation, or ingraft the whole system of our law and jurisprudence on a people already established in civilisation and order, as pretend to introduce and carry into effect the forms, offices, and administration of our Ecclesiastical Establishments in countries where neither Christianity nor these have previously existed.* This will not be matter of regret, but

* In the binding together of *sacred* with *secular* things, the "iron and clay" which do not amalgamate, we find Satan's device for corrupting and prostrating the Church under the principles and tyranny of the world—whence has sprung the great *Babylonish fabric*, with its yet imperfectly reformed progeny of Protestant European Churches. We do not, of course, expect or desire perpetuity

of rejoicing, where the Church's interests are freely committed to Him who is at the helm of its affairs. But we are behind yet in the science that teaches not to prescribe, but to learn from the Divine administration ; not to control, but to acquiesce in the arrangements made by Providence. While working a purifying effect upon the Churches that carry them on, missionary enterprises may be expected to produce new, and pure, and lovely specimens of Christianity among those who receive the heavenly embassy.

The gospel, as sent out by the London Missionary Society, has approved itself the power of God in many such manifestations. The desert has blossomed, the savage wilderness has been converted into a fruitful cultivated field ; the human wolf and lion forego their native ferocity, and assume the lamb-like aspect of the Son of Man. I need not tell you what you have learned from authentic sources ; and what some of the honoured labourers, returned from these scenes of toil and danger, are among us to declare. You feel also, I trust, the claims imposed by these signal benefits, the return justly looked for by Him who has so graciously requited our poor endeavours. Our faith is urged on by more vigorous stimulants than impelled the zeal of those who, fifty years

to these. But supposing *governments* themselves renovated, and conformed in all things to the Divine precepts and model—" kings become nursing-fathers, and queens nursing-mothers," to the Church—the incongruity might cease in the association of civil with sacred—the laws and polity of nations becoming a transcript of the law of God, and the men everywhere found to administer them being His true and devoted servants. In these last days of overflowing peace, which come, as we are taught, to crown the Church's career, the danger from corrupt administration of Establishments would come to an end, while the help derived from them would be hardly coveted or required. Their continuance or restoration need not, therefore, be matter of speculation with us.

ago, instituted this honoured association. To them belonged the toil, the effort, the discouragements, of an untried enterprise; to us is granted, entering into their labours, to taste of the sweet reward. Who would now draw back from a cause which God has owned; that has outlived the obloquy and opposition of many of its adversaries—a cause that has cleared its way, that has an open field before it, the fairest prospects, the sublimest and most exhilarating objects that can challenge human assiduity? Happy they who are called and baptized by the Holy Ghost for this blessed service; those that have fallen, and those who continue at the post of duty! Happy they also, in their measure, who supply the bread that perisheth; who bear them up, by continual sympathy and fellowship of spirit, at the throne of grace! Nothing that the weakest can do runs to waste in this blessed service. But let us be careful, my brethren, that what we do in it be done wholly to the Lord; that our offerings, whether they are, as the turtle-doves, spared from the produce of humble industry, or the wealthier gifts of prosperity and affluence, be, by the true consecration of faith and prayer, converted into the fine gold of the sanctuary. Do not think it enough to give liberally, as if discharging your conscience of obligations by getting rid of your money, and throwing on others all the responsibility of using it to good account, but in your hearts make an offering of it to the Lord; entreat Him to accept, and to accompany the laying out of it for you; that those who direct may be guided in the choice of instruments; that all the movements of the Society, in its different departments, may be under the Divine and gracious influence that is itself prosperity, and that multiplies, to an indefinite extent, the

fruits of our righteousness. This, I would venture to say, is the matter in which we come short; and to which we may trace the partial failure, the baffled efforts, the waste of life and of human resources, that have attended some of the Society's measures. We should be anxious to have, in our associated as well as in our private capacity, that characteristic of a good man, that "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper," and be careful that nothing be wanting on our part, however humble the position we hold, as contributors, collectors, managers, or missionaries, toward the prosperity of our undertaking. Your Society has been honoured to do much; much, I would say it without boasting, in proportion to its means. Still we must own it has done less, much less, than it might have done, had a still larger measure of faith, of love, of heavenly enthusiasm, entered into every movement of its proceedings. Let us do all we have done, my brethren; but let us abound yet more and more, so as to put an honourable disparagement on our past attainments, and to be a lesson of encouragement to ourselves and to those who follow us. Let us lay hold and take possession of the promises of God, so as to realise His word when He says to us, "Prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." "Then shall your peace be as the river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea."

II.

RELIGION PRESIDING OVER HOSPITALITY
AND SOCIAL ENJOYMENT.

“And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”—Job i. 4, 5.

A MORE captivating picture of prosperity could not easily be drawn, than is presented in the opening scene of this august and interesting portion of Holy Writ. The patriarch who is the subject of it was distinguished, above all the men of the East, for the piety, uprightness, and purity of his character. Of what man anywhere have we such a testimony as is borne to him by the Lord himself: “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” Enriched bountifully with the gifts of Providence, and recognising in these the kindness of his heavenly Father, he felt the satisfaction derived from them unspeakably improved by a consciousness of the favour of Him from whom they came; and, viewing himself as a steward of the great Proprietor, he employed the talents committed to him

in subservience to the glory of God and the good of men. His eminent wisdom, and tried integrity, procured for him the veneration of the princes of the people, and in a state of society where the distinctions of royalty seem to have been unknown, invested him, by the spontaneous concurrence of all, with the influence and authority of a king. His extensive beneficence, and impartial respect for the rights of others, taught the poor and afflicted to look to him as their friend and guardian—their physician in sickness, their comforter in sorrow, and their refuge against the encroachments of the powerful and the lawless. These truly honourable distinctions were accompanied with happiness of a yet more intimate kind, in those home endearments with which he was surrounded in a numerous family of sons and daughters. The liberality with which he acted toward his children, is apparent from the affluence in which they lived ; while the harmony and kindness that prevailed among them may be inferred from the interchange of hospitality they maintained : for it appears to have been the custom of the male branches of the family, at particular seasons, to entertain each other alternately, inviting their sisters to join those social meetings, which fostered the remembrance, and cherished the kindly feelings of the years they had passed together under their father's roof. This domestic felicity seemed secured by the solemn acknowledgment of the Divine authority with which it was accompanied, and by that godly jealousy with which the patriarch regarded his children, for which there probably was no more specific ground than the fatal tendency of human nature, especially in the fulness of prosperity, to forget the obligations of spiritual religion. At the close of

their social meetings he was wont to assemble the whole family for sacred exercises ; and, in conformity with the prescriptions of religion in that early period, to offer sacrifices for them all, and to renew the dedication of them to Jehovah, accompanying these acts with confession of sins and prayer for Divine grace.

Is it possible to conceive a fairer scene of domestic happiness ? In the father of the family we behold an illustrious example of faith and piety, rendering him the strength and blessing of the land where he dwelt ; surrounded with sons and daughters, generous and affectionate in their character, attending their honoured parent in the services of piety, nor looking beyond the family circle for their social enjoyments. Mutual love and mutual prayer seem to cast a shield over them, and to give no uncertain promise of abiding prosperity. Who could have anticipated the sad reverse prepared in the purposes of Heaven, or have admitted the possibility of a fall so unparalleled, from the summit of prosperity to the lowest depth of affliction ? Of those grievous disasters which he who is "a murderer from the beginning" was permitted to inflict on Job, the last was by far the heaviest. When informed of the loss of his substance, by depredation of the enemy or by the fire of heaven, Job uttered no complaint ; but when informed of the destruction of his sons and daughters, by the fall of the house in which they feasted, his soul was overwhelmed, his earthly hopes were extinguished ; nothing remained, in his apprehension, but to die. "He arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return

thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." The loan had been precious, but it had been recalled; and, withdrawing his hope from a world with which he felt no remaining tie, he acknowledged and adored the sovereignty of Jehovah.

This heavy bereavement, we know, was permitted, in reference to the patriarch, to perfect his faith and patience, and to present him, in all after ages, as an illustrious model to the faithful; but we know not whether, in reference to his children, it did not bear a character of righteous displeasure. The faith of Job would not have been fully tried if some doubt had not existed on this point; if the apprehensions of parental solicitude had not accompanied the sorrows of bereaved affection. The circumstances in which they perished were arranged by the great adversary, for the very purpose of inflicting the severest wound on his heart. During his prosperity he had felt disturbing fears with respect to his children; and now that which he feared seemed to have come upon him, the objects of his solicitude being hurried into eternity, by a sudden and fearful visitation, in the midst of those festive enjoyments which, if we may not allege them in proof of an unrenewed state of mind, have at least a tendency to distract and discompose the mind's spirituality. The ways of God are indeed mysterious, nor is it our office to determine what Scripture has left undetermined. If, on the one hand, it were rash to infer, merely from the circumstance of their religious education, that their hearts were assuredly right with God, it were no less presumptuous, from the circumstance of their sudden death by a whirlwind—designed, by the mysterious agent in these calamities, to perplex the mind

of the bereaved father—to draw an unfavourable conclusion as to their state in the sight of Him whose “mercies are in the heavens, and whose judgments are a great deep.”

But while we leave secret things with God, we should lose an important lesson conveyed to us by this history, if, in contrasting the prosperity of the patriarch and his family with the dire calamities that suddenly engulfed them, the hilarity of the feast in its progress with the terror and ruin of its termination, we did not learn the necessity of unceasing watchfulness and prayer, of a mind habitually disengaged from worldly affections, and prepared to meet with God ; if we did not learn that in the season of relaxation and social enjoyment, our dependence on Providence is never to be forgotten, our preparation for death never to be neglected ; that life is not, in any circumstances, a state of security ; and that safety is found only in the favour of Him whose love to His children is unchanging, however His dispensations may change : and such admonitions appear peculiarly necessary at the present season,* when it is customary to indulge in social and family entertainments, not unlike those in which the family of the patriarch were wont to engage. While a benevolent mind naturally participates in those feelings of affectionate gratulation, and in those good wishes for each other's prosperity and lengthened days, that are expressed at the close of one year and the commencement of another, it is impossible not to regret the perverted bias of human nature that converts these innocent and joyous festivities into occasions of sin and of mutual injury. A regard for your real welfare cannot but awaken a jealous fear, similar to that

* The beginning of the Christmas holidays.

felt by the patriarch—a solicitude to guard you against the treachery of hearts easily deceived, and the perverting influence of an ensnaring world.

That social and convivial meetings are, on some occasions, allowable and becoming, few will be disposed to deny; nor can it be supposed that religion, which prescribes mutual benevolence and affection, should prohibit mutual enjoyment. It is desirable that those who are often brought into contact in the business and labours of life, or in its trials and sorrows, should sometimes meet in more cheerful scenes, in the interchange of kindness and hospitality. Such meetings, at proper seasons, have a beneficial influence in promoting harmony and good understanding, in softening those asperities that are apt to arise in the collisions of society, and in fostering mutual esteem and affection. The views of interest and the calculations of care being set aside, we are invited to give ourselves to more enlarged and kindly feelings. The old are warmed by the vivacity of youth, and experience a revival of cheerful emotions that have almost passed away, and been forgotten amid the serious anxieties or cautious tendencies of more advanced life: the young are instructed by the conversation and encouraged by the kindness of age: the members of the same family are reminded of the endearments of their early life and the obligations of their maturer years: while the friendly visitor, and the stranger, sharing in the rites of hospitality, promote and reciprocate those philanthropic feelings that reach far beyond the family circle, and embrace the men of distant lands. In a world where private and personal concerns necessarily engross so much of our regard, it is desirable the generous emotions of the heart be some-

times called into exercise in the exhilarating atmosphere of social intercourse and open-hearted hospitality.

The Scriptures, we may remark, allude, with manifest approbation, to several occasions of festivity. Thus they inform us that Abraham made a feast, in token, doubtless, of his gratitude and joy, when Isaac was weaned; and that David feasted all the people of Jerusalem, when he had brought up the ark with joy. By the Jewish law, stated festivals were prescribed, when the people were invited to rejoice in the goodly portion assigned them. After the defeat of the atrocious attempt of Haman, the Jews' enemy, an annual festival was instituted in commemoration of that event—"a good day," when the Jews sent presents and distributed alms. And though, in the Christian Church, no festivals are prescribed, except of a spiritual kind, yet private hospitality, on suitable occasions, is abundantly commended. And need I remind you of a feast honoured with the presence of the Son of God, and distinguished by the exertion of His miraculous power, not for relieving distress, but for contributing what promoted the enjoyment of the company? Who can behold Him turning the water into wine for the accommodation of the guests, without adoring the kindness that dictated such an exercise of Almighty power? and did we possess more of the spirit of Jesus, the scenes of social entertainment would bear a nobler character, and might be more unhesitatingly enjoyed. It is the folly and weakness of man that plants his enjoyments with dangers and snares. With the view of guarding you against these, I offer a few observations, obvious in themselves, and important to be practically held in remembrance.

I. If you would act a Christian part in your social intercourse and entertainments, it is manifest they must be conducted *with such prudence and moderation as to exclude the idea of extravagance, vanity, and excess*. It is not certainly in the act of entertaining our friends that a narrow or parsimonious spirit is to be practised—we are to “use hospitality without grudging ;” but we must ever remember that as our duties are prescribed by the circumstances in which we are placed, so are our enjoyments limited by them ; nor is there anything more necessary to our respectability as members of society, or our consistency as Christians, than an accommodation of our expenses and gratifications to the measure of those means which we possess for supporting them. To some Providence has dispensed its gifts with a more liberal, to others with a more sparing hand, and there cannot be a more delusive conclusion than that, in these different circumstances, the same things are allowable or commendable. If a man of narrow means think himself required to entertain his friends with the same frequency, or with the same sumptuousness, as one of large fortune, he mistakes the path of duty, and falls into similar impropriety with the man who assumes a rank that does not belong to him.

I ask whether, under the fair guise of hospitality, injustice may not sometimes be detected ; whether that man is not chargeable with dishonesty who incurs no small expense in entertaining his acquaintance, while he does so at the risk of those who have valid claims against him for the pecuniary supplies their friendship has advanced, or for the produce of their laborious industry ? Is it not sometimes found that those

who have good reason to question their ability to render to all their due, continue to indulge in expensive entertainments—perhaps even making a parade of these as a blind to deceive the world as to their real situation? Such men cannot but be conscious that they act a dishonourable part, which a morality far less pure than that of the gospel must unequivocally condemn—a part which, when the truth comes out, cannot fail to expose them to merited reproach, not only from those whom they directly injure, but from all upright men.

But while sinister and dishonest views may sometimes prompt an expensive show of hospitality, perhaps a more ordinary motive is found in a principle of worldly ambition. For is not the parade of wealth sometimes assumed as a means of obtaining wealth, with a view, by extended connexion, to promote influence, and give credence and plausibility to venturesome speculations, which, if they prove fortunate, are expected to open the way to still advancing fortune? How dangerous the paths in which some have erred in this line—worldly pelf the alluring bait, with shame and ruin as the alternative! Are there not parents who adopt an expensive style of living, on an ambitious calculation of the probable advantages their children may derive from being introduced into gay society, and mingling in the circles of the world? Are there not those who justify themselves in expenses which they feel to be heavy, on the ground of their subservience to advance the prospects of a family, or promote desirable alliances?—an expectation which usually proves fallacious, or, at any rate, seems to imply a wish to impose on those with whom they associate, and overreach them in the competition for worldly advantages. Are there not

parents who penuriously withhold from their children those parts of education that might cultivate their minds and prepare them for the right performance of the duties of life, while they are lavish in those expenses which they suppose will advance them in the circles of fashion, and raise them in the estimation of a vain world? "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is *earthly*," characterising those "who mind earthly things."

But no fortune, however ample, will justify a vain and expensive conviviality, or vindicate either extravagance or excess. The indulgence of vanity on the one hand, and of luxury on the other, is equally inconsistent with the law of Christ. We have no reason to suppose that the rich man in the parable exceeded his income, or injured any in their legal claims on him. It is more likely that by the extent of his expenditure, and the many accommodations requisite for his comfort, he gave employment to the industry of many, and was esteemed a benefactor by the neighbourhood. But his self-indulgence, and love of pleasure and pomp, shewed that he was a child of the world, and that his personal gratifications, and not the glory of God, were the objects nearest his heart. In the exercise of hospitality a liberal mind will, indeed, devise liberal things. We admire the zeal of Abraham in running to the herd, and fetching the fatted calf for his illustrious guests. When you ask your friends to visit you, they naturally expect such entertainment as may conduce to the comfort of your social meeting: this is becoming; but luxury, and show, and the mere indulgence in pleasures of a sensual kind, are wrong wherever they are found.

In a case where no absolute or universal rule can be

established, something must be left to the taste and discretion of individuals ; but if, through the vanity of some who lead, and the weakness of others who follow, the general style of entertainments has become extravagant, each rivalling his neighbour's splendour, or aiming at surpassing it, it is the obvious duty of those who acknowledge a higher authority than custom or fashion, to shew that they decline the inglorious competition ; and that their object is neither to gratify their own vanity nor the extravagant expectations of others, but simply to express and promote the feelings of genuine kindness. In convivial meetings, does it not often happen, amid the successive courses of expensive dishes, and the general indulgence of luxurious taste, that no space is left for the exercise of virtuous and endearing affection, or for the improving collisions of intellect, but the whole entertainment degenerates into little more than a sensuous gratification ? The absurd practice of urging the guests to drink more than they are themselves inclined to, is happily banished from those tables where attention is paid to the rules of civility or of religion. Still it is to be feared that amid the many incentives to intemperance which convivial parties present, there are not a few who violate the rules of Christian moderation : and from the unrestrained indulgences of the table the transition is easy to " foolish talking and jesting," to irreligion and profaneness. From such excesses let Christians flee. How impressive the words of Christ : " Take heed, lest at any time ye be overcome with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon you unawares ! "

My brethren, if you be the disciples of Christ, would you not wish to follow Him in all things ? And how noble, how

majestic His appearance, on a memorable occasion, when He became the generous host of the multitudes of whom He had been the teacher ; dispensing His bounty to a company which, in point of numbers, would have done honour to the hospitality of a king, while His disciples were the willing ministering servants, active in attendance, seeing that every one's wants were supplied. Need I remind you of the simplicity of the fare, of the order and decorum of the feast, of the grateful acknowledgment of the Divine bounty with which it opened, and the kind attention to the guests with which every part of it was marked ? A compassionate concern for the circumstances in which He saw them, led our Lord to issue the invitation ; and while plenty filled the board, piety and prudence presided over the distribution. Nor can we forget the lesson conveyed to us at the conclusion of the entertainment, in that singular injunction, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." Miraculous abundance was not to be thrown away. And was not the precept designed to teach us, in our greatest affluence to avoid unnecessary waste, and to husband our resources for the extension of our usefulness ?

II. This leads us to a second observation, namely, that *our social entertainments should be attended with corresponding liberality to the poor*. While the heart is expanded with the feelings of kindness, and warmed with the communications of hospitality, we should take care that the poor come in for a proportionate share of our fellow-feeling, and that our social enjoyments be accompanied with a more express attention to the duties of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked.

If your entertainments are plenteous, your liberality ought to bear a proportion to them. And hence we draw an additional argument against vanity and extravagance, and the love of pomp and show. Those who live up to the full extent of their incomes in family expenditure, cannot be liberal, even though they should be compassionate, for they have nothing in their hands to impart to others. Prudence and economy are the handmaids of liberality. The habits of gay life not only render the heart insensible and selfish, teaching it to regard every demand of charity as an encroachment on private pleasure, but make it impossible to follow those dictates of humanity that might spontaneously spring up in a mind not debauched by selfish indulgence. The Christian moralist inculcates economy for truly noble purposes : he asks you to save, not for the sake of *saving*—that were to make you niggards ; not for the sake of *hoarding*—that were to make you misers ; not for the sake of *after gratification*—that were to make you penurious for the present, and licentious afterwards : but he asks you to exercise economy that you may lay a good foundation for the exercise of liberality—to deny yourselves selfish gratifications for the luxury of doing good.

In the frequent renewal of those ponderous feasts under which the table groans, where only the best of every thing is applied to use, and the inferior parts are thrown aside, there must be great waste of the bounty of Providence. Many poor might be fed on those crumbs that fall from the rich man's table ; which, in those kitchens where no rules of Christian economy are inculcated, are wasted as in contempt of the circumstances of the indigent. This is a crying in-

justice to the poor, which the Judge of all will not fail to requite.

One of the objects on which it often happens to us to hear the world bestowing its warmest commendation, is a man liberal as opulent, who surrounds himself with a numerous circle of applauding friends, and sheds the sunshine of his bland affability and joyous hilarity over all that come within the sphere of his attraction. May it not often be said of him, as of those Pharisees whose aim terminated in the scene that surrounded them, "Verily he has his reward!" Our Lord has directed us to a more noble and appropriate exercise of Christian virtue in this counsel, "Thou, when thou makest a feast, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee: but call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv. 12-14). On this principle the Christian seeks to evade the remuneration of human applause, as well as the recompense of hospitality like his own. Thus he secures the purity of his own motives, and the precious, though perhaps solitary, approbation of his Father in heaven, who, "seeing in secret, rewardeth openly."

How few are there who seem practically to adopt the Christian doctrine with regard to the exercise of kindness and hospitality—who feel in its force the weight of that sentence of disapprobation that is passed by the Word of God upon those who give to the wealthy, who flatter the proud, and who call the rich happy! The system of the

world's liberality seems all conducted on the principle of being "friends to him that giveth gifts," of bestowing on them that can render a return, of "looking for something again." How seldom is the table of hospitality spread for those who have no chance of ever recompensing the kindness ! How few value, as faith would teach us to appreciate, the grateful prayers of the humble, and the blessing of him that is ready to perish ! How faint is the exercise of that sympathy that teaches to equalise the allotments of Providence by a free communication of our comforts to those who suffer from the want of them ; of that love that introduces a community of interests into the family of the faithful, and leaves the satisfaction of every member impaired till the joy is universal and none remains cut off from participation in it ! Yet is it not essential that we do not fail in these testimonials of fidelity ? For they are enjoined by the same authority and enforced by the same sanctions that require universal impartial obedience. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good : and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?" "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." And the final decision as to character will pass in conformity with these principles : "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." Your converse here, my Christian friends, is with an absent and unseen Saviour : you cannot invite Him to your house nor welcome Him as your guest ; you cannot embrace Him, nor draw near to kiss His feet and water them with the tears of reverence and

affection ; but how interesting the thought, that by identifying Himself with the poor of His flock, He gives you an opportunity of ministering to Him such entertainment as He most delights in, such offices of grateful hospitality and welcome love as He holds Himself bound graciously to acknowledge.

III. I add one remark more, necessarily connected with those already offered : *Your social intercourse, if you would please God in it, must be so conducted as to be, not injurious, but subservient to the high ends Christians should ever aim at—their personal improvement and the glory of their heavenly Father.* These are ends never to be forgotten, unless you would forego the authority of Christ. Many, when brought together to a convivial party, seem to think themselves dispensed from all those obligations of religion which, on other occasions, they profess to acknowledge ; while for the irreligious, there are no circumstances in which they discover such audacity in wickedness as when excited by the indulgence of the appetite and emboldened by evil communications. It appears from history that many of the most wicked things done by man have been devised or executed in the very act of enjoying the bounty of Providence. Was it not when Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, was feasting a thousand of his lords, that he issued the impious command to bring forth the vessels of the temple, that had been brought from Jerusalem, that he and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink out of them, apparently for the express purpose of insulting the God of Israel ? Was it not when Herod made a great supper to the high estates of Galilee, that he

gave the fatal promise that involved him in the guilt of murdering the Baptist? And how often has the convivial board exhibited the selfsame principles of contempt of God and enmity against his servants! How often do even those who assume the name and privileges of Christians, in those unguarded moments when the heart utters all its feelings, write, as it were, on their own character a sentence legible as the handwriting on the wall of the Babylonish banqueting room: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting!" Even good men have often been injured by convivial intercourse with the bad, although amity and affinity might be pleaded as the occasion. We find an example in that excellent prince Jehoshaphat, who, having suffered his son to marry Ahab's daughter, probably in the vain hope of the political advantages that might arise from a league of peace between Judah and Israel, afterwards visited Ahab in Samaria; and there, seduced by his flattering attentions and sumptuous hospitality, was led to join him in a war which, being entered on in contempt of the express admonitions of Heaven, necessarily terminated in shame and loss. To this subject we may justly apply the apostle's admonition: "Be not unequally united with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

My brethren, as a Christian should form no voluntary engagement on which it might not be permitted to ask the blessing of God, so should he act so as to invite this blessing. I would not abridge that liberty which the apostle concedes to believers, to accept, on proper occasions, the invitations even of those whom they cannot regard as brethren in

Christ ; but unquestionably it becomes him who daily prays, "lead us not into temptation," to guard against those circumstances that would endanger his integrity and purity. And in whatever company he finds himself, it will be his desire to promote the happiness, the comfort, and the spiritual edification of those around him. He whose life is devoted to useful purposes does not change his character or his taste when he mingles in society. He may seek relaxation, but it is relaxation allied to his general habits of feeling and action. The very term *pleasure* implies that his taste is gratified by the exercise of his predominant dispositions. The sight of his friends awakens his affection, and, kindling a warmer glow of good-will, excites him to impart, or to desire to receive, something profitable. He does not wrap himself up in his own importance, or look on society as a thing contrived only to contribute to his gratification ; but rather, like his great Master, seeks the distinction of serving others and doing them good. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

I must not conclude without addressing a few words to those who may think they have little concern in the subject of which I have been treating, their circumstances of poverty precluding all idea of those enjoyments that are found in the exercise or in the participation of hospitality. Perhaps, my friends, you are tempted to think that the rich carry away all the advantages, that the very path to heaven is made smooth to them—forgetting what an alarming obstacle these supposed advantages throw in the way of all serious endeavours after obtaining the things that belong to salvation. The character of that influence which the Word of God so energetically

ascribes to riches, might well deter every spiritually-awakened mind from the wish to encounter the danger connected with so ensnaring an embarrassment. Who among the wise of this world ever ventured to take delight in what threatened destruction to the object of their dearest wishes? Who that has set himself in earnest to make sure of heaven, would venture on thinking of enjoyment in that which increases, to an undefinable magnitude, the difficulty of his ever getting there—in that which places the object of his wishes in the list of things that are held all but impossibilities? A large increase of riches, unaccompanied with such increase of grace as might set temptation at defiance, is to be considered in no other light than as an incalculable and unprovided for evil. And even in those rare cases, when wealth is sanctified by true devotion, and the rich have learned the duties that belong to a faithful stewardship under the great Proprietor, it is not their riches, but their spirit, that is the proper object of your covetous ambition; it is the grace that shines in them, free equally to the rich and to the poor. You have not the houses and the lands of Barnabas, and cannot express your affection for your brethren by selling your property, and distributing to the poor; but the same generous love that animated him may inspire and sanctify your conduct—the same spirit that glowed in the breast of Peter and his companion when, at the gate of the temple, he said to the lame man, “Silver and gold have I none.” There are graces of peculiar excellence that hardly come to perfection in any soil but that of poverty—the meekness of submission, the patience of faith, the generosity of Christian benevolence—that pure, unsullied benevolence which looks without envy on the

possessions of the rich, which bears with their pride in consideration of their ignorance, and, satisfied with those limited and uncertain supplies which its faith is disciplined in waiting for, rises, with animated affection, to spiritual enjoyments, and draws, from conformity to Christ in His sufferings, an increased confidence of the future participation of His glory. If the rich believer, abounding in fruits of righteousness, be a noble character, the poor believer is not less so, who applauds the varied allotments of Providence while receiving, day by day, his limited portion, and who, instead of envying, compassionates the dangers of the rich, and is thankful for a lot that frees him from their temptations.

III.

MEMORABLE TIMES THAT STAND FOR WAY-MARKS IN THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE.

"It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations."—Exodus xii. 42.

THE period here referred to—the night thus solemnly presented to the commemoration of the children of Israel—belongs to a very remarkable era in their history, and signalises a deliverance the most extraordinary of any recorded in the annals even of that people, "wonderful from their beginning hitherto." Their history, one of the first that wins our admiring attention in childhood, is replete with instruction for every stage of life and of Christian experience. And it presents us with such a singular and majestic display of the march of a controlling Providence,—with such a combination of what is marvellous in fact, with what is true in nature, and genuine in its accordance with the experience of man,—with events probable though extraordinary, and affecting as they are unprecedented,—with characters as briefly and rapidly sketched as perfect and exquisite in their lineaments,—and, above all, with such a sovereign subordination of the whole of these to the declared purpose of preserving one people on

earth among whom the name of the true God should be known, and from whom the promised Saviour should arise,—that we are struck as with the voice of truth addressing us from heaven; we cease to wonder at that isolated and peculiar character, diverse from all the nations, which these circumstances combined to form; we are smitten with the genius of Israelitish patriotism, and deeply sympathise with that people in their attachment to institutions coeval with their existence as a nation, and in their reverential esteem of the minutest of those divinely directed incidents that furnish the most endeared and sacred charm of their national poetry, and were once inseparably interwoven with the whole texture of their civil and domestic relations. Ah, why are they so long aliens, ejected from that Church that still reveres them as its founders and patrons? why still destitute and unconscious of the happiness enjoyed in the fulfilment of those promises that sustained, through ages, the hopes of their fathers?

The era—*that night*—which our text so solemnly commemorates, was that in which the prophecy appointing them a long term of bondage in a land of strangers, had received its accomplishment. That mysterious dispensation had now come to a close; and though human appearances had undergone no change in their favour, and though their deliverance seemed still suspended on the will of their inflamed and inexorable persecutor, that period had arrived beyond which no human powers, nor combination of powers, earthly and super-human, could prolong their state of desolation—that period at which God assumed to himself the decision of their destiny, and appeared, once and finally, for their complete deliverance, and for the overwhelming and irreparable overthrow of their

tyrant and his impious hosts. It belongs to prophecy to convey a full revelation only in its actual accomplishment, and to leave much room for the exercise of the faith, sagacity, and wisdom of man, in the progress of all those intermediate events that work out a fixed and irreversible consummation. Four hundred years, counting from the time when the revelation was made, had been foretold to Abraham respecting his posterity, previous to their attaining the final possession of the land of promise ; but it is probable that it was secret to him, and to his immediate descendants, *from what period* this calamitous dispensation was to take its date, or by what instrument it was to receive its accomplishment. When the patriarch Jacob in his old age, following the guidance of a guardian Providence, forsook the land of Canaan, and, accompanied by his numerous and flourishing progeny, set out to re-embrace, and to close his days with his long-lost Joseph, it is probable that the remote consequences of that proceeding were not suggested to his mind. And though both he and Joseph saw far beyond these events into futurity, and died with full conviction and fervent attestations that the land in which they dwelt was not to be the ultimate residence of their posterity, or the scene of the fulfilment of the glorious promises so often renewed to them and to their fathers, yet it appears not that they were certainly aware how soon a reverse of fortune would follow their removal, nor how those prospects would be blasted that promised their descendants security and peace in the land that yielded them a temporary home.

The illustrious Joseph closed his eyes in peace, in a good old age, and all the men of that generation died ; after which

there arose another king who knew not Joseph, and the prospects of the lately-planted colonists were at once reversed. There was everything to recommend the people of Israel to the esteem and consideration of the Egyptians, as well in the signal preservation that had attended the commencement of their connexion, and in the special Providence that made them its manifest care, blessing the land in which they dwelt for their sakes, as in their moral habits of industry, equity, and sobriety, so directly conducive to the welfare of states ; yet the Egyptian monarch, instigated by a base and jealous policy, considered it the dictate of wisdom to treat them at once as enemies—the sure way to force on them that character. Instead of enriching his country, as a patriotic sovereign would have done, by attaching them to its interests as home-born allies, and securing for its population all the advantages that would accrue from a gradual and intimate amalgamation, he loses not a moment in plying every measure of irritation which the bigotry of selfishness and cowardice could suggest, and pursues them with a malignity which no submission, or consistency in the duties of faithful subjects, on their part, could appease. How depressing was their lot ! There was no hope for them from better counsels, from changing interests, from secret influence, or open negotiation. They had no advocate at court ; a whole mighty nation had combined against them : for bad princes find it easy to apologise for persecution and confiscation to those who are to become partakers in the spoil ; nor are there ever wanting, in the vicinity of degenerate kings, those who are base enough to whet the weapons of tyranny, so they can turn their edge against some alien victim that can retort no

wound when vilified, proscribed, and crushed. How do we commiserate the anguish of that maternal affection that began its woes where those of others end—the agonies of those embraces, the first, the last, bestowed on interesting babes, the children of the promise, endeared by a much-honoured ancestry, and by the most cherished expectations, ere they were torn from desiring eyes, to be consigned to the stifling waters, or to those more hated amphibious reptiles that frequent the Nile! How would our hearts rise against such martyrdom, were it not for that word—"of such is the kingdom of heaven!" Condemned thus to interminable slavery under masters who aimed at nothing less than their extermination, what power could have prevented this fatal issue, had not an unseen hand perpetually upheld them, reversing all the purposes and confounding all the devices of their enemies; so that, the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and grew?

Yet effectual relief was long delayed. More than one race of persecutors had passed away—more than one generation of sufferers had found quiet in the grave, ere the Lord commissioned Moses to visit His desponding people with assurances of a speedy and glorious deliverance. The plant of heavenly root was not to be extirpated. Divinely sustained, its stately stem retained yet all its strength, and its spreading branches their sap and vigour, unconsumed amid the ardent fire of adversity. We wonder not at the abject state of their hopes, at the prompt ascendancy of fear over spirits debased by slavery and embittered by hard bondage; nor need we wonder, judging by ourselves, at their ready relapses into despondency on each new alarm, or at their frequent diffi-

dence as to the adequacy of the means they saw called to their aid against their long dreaded and most persevering oppressors. The arm of Omnipotence—so strikingly displayed in a succession of miraculous judgments, each ushered in with a solemn appeal to their aroused attention, and only withdrawn when it had fulfilled its commission—was an exhibition not less necessary for the revival of their languishing hopes and extinguished confidence, than it was needful to quell the rage and abash the pride of their impious tyrant. Both these effects were in some degree produced. They were on the eve of that last awful visitation by which, more than by any that had preceded it, the Lord meant to smite at the hearts of the dismayed Egyptians, when he instituted the most solemn of their sacramental festivals—the passover. How momentous was the time ! how big with impending destiny for them and for the denizens of the land ! Yet there is no perturbation, no hurry in their arrangements. They received a detailed directory of the whole proceeding that was to guide the observance of this solemnity, for them, and for the strangers that should unite with them through all their coming generations. They knew the dire calamity about to be inflicted ; they knew of that sudden consternation that would expedite their departure. Equipped for their journey, with loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and staves in their hand, they despatched their meal in haste, waiting the awful signal. How wonderful the working of Jehovah ! No sooner was the blow inflicted, in the death of the first-born, than all opposition seemed demolished, and every obstacle to that before impossible event, their escape out of Egypt, was removed. The tyrants became suppliants to their slaves ; the captives were entreated of their

jailors ; loading them with gifts of which no term of repayment would ever arrive, they were urgent on them to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We be all dead men."

It was at this solemn crisis that our text takes up their history ; this was "that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." One tremendous judgment was yet to follow, compared to which the others were but threatenings, which, if hearkened to, might have averted the last—a retribution due to the offended majesty of heaven, due to the claims of profaned and insulted justice. When the vindictive monarch, enraged that so slight a foe should so easily escape him, summoned the hosts of Egypt—his martial pomp of six thousand chariots, his bannered legions, his innumerable horsemen—the trembling fugitives approved but ill their affiance in that arm that had wrought for them already so many deliverances. "Because there were no graves in Egypt," said they, "hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? And they cried out unto the Lord." Alas ! what would our faith have done for us in their circumstances? Prepared for a journey, but not for a battle,—burdened with implements of peace, with little ones, with flocks, with much cattle,—behind them marched, in thick array, the embattled powers of Egypt, "Busiris and his Memphian chivalry ;" their way of escape lay through the trackless ocean, a mighty adversary, whose fathomless expanse, wide enough to entomb more than one generation of all that breathes, seemed yawning to receive them from the sword of their destroyer. One hope only was theirs : the triumph of such an hour was due to God alone. He only has "made

the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over." Seasonable was the admonition of their leader to fainting hearts and powerless hands,—“Be still, and see the salvation of God : he shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”

This imperfect sketch of incidents, connected with the era referred to in our text, may serve to assist you in calling to remembrance some of those lessons of personal instruction addressed to us everywhere throughout the sacred history, and to present you with some of those analogies betwixt the Church's experience and that of individuals, which the spiritual mind dwells on with profit and delight. I will proceed now to a more practical application of our text, by bringing into consideration some of those *times in our lives* which seem to demand our special observance, and to deserve to be distinguished as “*nights of the Lord.*”

And here the pious mind, on the first regard, may find a difficulty in selection. For, have not the mercies of God run parallel with our lives, distinguishing every part of them, even those most marked on our side by ingratitude, contempt, and opposition? They began toward us before we had existence, and long before memory commenced its record. He who clothes the lilies of the field, and feeds the birds of the air, supplied all our wants from the first moment of our being. All those tender cares and fond affections that cherished and guarded our infancy were of our Father's providing ; as well as that more efficient guardianship which human hearts and human hands, however faithful and assiduous, cannot supply. Which of us has not been the subject of such special protection and marked deliverances that we should call them miraculous, did not the incessant watchful-

ness of Providence render them common, diminishing to our disingenuous hearts the value of blessings by their frequency? A circumstance that I recollect a friend mentioned to me may serve to recall to you numberless such providential deliverances as it describes. When a child, he was playing in a barn-yard; and having got concealed under the hay with which the farm servants were raising a stack, he was caught up, with a truss of hay, between the points of a hay-fork, and thrown upon the stack without receiving any injury. The child returned to his play, unconscious of the danger he had escaped, and is indebted to his friends for the preservation of the fact, as he is to what, in the world's language, is called an extraordinary accident for the preservation of his life.

And are not extraordinary mercies thrown away upon the most of us, through life, from an obtuseness of spiritual apprehension corresponding with the imbecility of infancy? We know not God, nor regard the operation of His hand; else should we not continually acknowledge Him, not only in the nice adjustment of all the elements of nature to our use and preservation, but in that sedulous control which seems still to regulate and restrain their tendencies, guarding the feeble fibre of human life, and respecting the sensitive nerve of human health and human felicity? The waves of the sea roar and toss themselves; but there is a limit which they dare not pass. The fire is a fierce and devouring element; yet it becomes a ministering servant, obedient to the direction of man. The wild beasts of the field and of the forest are savage and mighty; but they fly the approach and yield to the dominion of their human lord. Were Jehovah to

turn His hand, or for a moment to let slip the reins of His almighty administration, how soon might all the powers of nature become ministers of destruction, and this earth become the cemetery of all its inhabitants! "*Who can stand before His cold?*" A little aggravation of this, or of the opposite agent, is enough to extinguish the slender germ of animal existence; but it is *His cold*, and therefore can execute only His pleasure. His is the thunder: it is "His voice that is upon many waters;" it is He that "sitteth upon the flood;" it is He that "rideth upon the wings of the wind."

How susceptible are we of pain in every part, and from an infinite variety of causes! If a tooth but ache, the whole frame is absorbed in sympathy with it. Yet how many more days have we lived in ease than in suffering! How have our pains been mitigated and measured by our capacity to sustain them! And with respect to those mental sufferings which, like the other, are a part of our doom as sinners, how have these been assuaged by mercies and alleviated by consolations, so that our days of sorrow, even without taking into account the spiritual benefit God may have wrought for us by them, have not been completely unhappy! How do our sorrows find a remedy, even in the very feebleness of our nature, that eludes their edge, bringing us the stated refreshment of sleep, and refusing energy for too lengthened a contest,—that yields to the insidious hand of time the force of our deepest impressions,—that conforms to imperious necessity, finding in resignation the contentment that was not to be obtained from the objects of our wishes, and learning to acquiesce in humbler forms of happiness! To what extent

all the woes that here fall to the lot of any individual are moderated and tempered by the spirit of mercy, we may judge from the feignings of fancy and the apprehensions of fear—sources from which it is the characteristic of fallen creatures to draw often their most poignant sufferings. From how many dreams have we awoke with hearts loaded with sadness, grasping the blessed deliverance attending the discovery that it was but a dream! What accumulation of wretchedness and perplexity has the heart the power of drawing around itself, from all the provinces of nature, under the influence of a conscience which guilt has polluted, and of a bodily organisation which sin has shattered and undone!

But from preservations and deliverances of an external and physical kind, I go on to consider, in the second place, deliverances from the *power of temptation and the effects of sin*, as times of the Lord to be especially remembered by us. And here I apprehend I shall be able to give you but a faint idea of the extent of our obligations to God, for the exercise of his providential interference in this way, if we confine our attention to those instances only which have been so palpable as to arrest our marked observance and call forth our express acknowledgments. The dominion of sin is so extensive, and in most cases so absolute, that its operations awaken but little attention. We are accustomed to tolerate it to a certain extent, and, unless it alarm our fear, or our vigilance, with some more than ordinarily vivid emotion, to deal with it as with a foe whose secret strength we are afraid to explore, and whom we have not so much conquered as bribed to an accommodation. We ask a respite from the more daring and

heinous aggressions of an inbred tormentor; but, wearied with the incessant struggle, submit, by connivance, to his power, if not to his pretensions, in the more measured exercise of his tyranny.

Who among the just and upright, the sincere and devout, as men are called, when compared on the graduated scale of human attainments, could open his heart to such an inspection from his fellow as meets the eye of his God? Where would be our mutual esteem, the consideration and respect we claim from each other, had we such talismans of one another's thoughts,—were all our failures in the virtues we aspire after, all our blemishes from the vices we detest, legible to the eyes of our fellow-sinners? How would the pride of the humble, the vindictive anger of the meek, the self-applauding dreams of the lowly, the envy of the generous and the brave, tinge each cheek with shame? And, instead of exercising us, as they may well do, in those emotions becoming the Christian bosom—self-loathing and self-abasement—might they not stagger our confidence in the reality of heavenly purity as communicable to the character of man, and abash our hopes of the efficacy and final triumph of renewing grace? And if, with all our advantages we are only what we are,—if, with all the obstacles and checks sin meets with from enlightened conscience, from the resistance of the Spirit of grace, from fear, from shame, from the infusion of rectified and just feeling in a society much civilised and refined by Christian principle, we attain to no more secure and permanent perfection—our words and actions a little excelling our thoughts, but all betraying too indubitably their base origin and tendency—what should we be if abandoned to the

buffetings of temptation, if left in our native helplessness to stem the overwhelming torrent? "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

Indebted as we are to the unremitting care of *Providence* for a thousand unseen and undiscovered natural preservations, are we not still more indebted to the Father of mercies and God of all grace for those moral preservations that have saved us from a thousand spiritual deaths? How many deliverances has He provided, letting our souls "escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler;" turning the tide, or stemming the impetuosity of passion; withdrawing the soul from defeated aims, or alluring its ardour to better objects of attraction; deadening the force of worldly attachments by the threatenings of death, or the visitings of misfortune, or overpowering them by an invigorated impulse given to the springs of our spiritual ambition? Which of us needs to look back to a distant period in the history of his life, to light on the time when he was but "as a dead man" in the hand of his spiritual enemy; when, enslaved under the dominion of some turbulent lust or domineering passion, his fall was sure, if measured by his own power of resistance; when his better purposes lay "scattered as bones at the grave's mouth;" when fear, and shame, and remorse had desisted from their opposition, and the thought of a censuring world and of an offended Deity offered no further obstacle to the victory of temptation, and the prostrate sinner seemed free only to the choice of perdition? And if we have not

been on the brink of such a precipice, is it to our own care or virtue that we can ascribe the preservation? If we were abandoned of our God, as we have often been of ourselves,—if He withdrew His restraining grasp, and left us in the hour of our helplessness to the malice of our adversary,—if He did not spread His sheltering skirt over us, “staying His rough wind in the day of His east wind,” withdrawing delusion from our imagination, and separating the will from the power, the moment of temptation from the moment of opportunity,—which of us would be found in the regions of hope? How fruitless were all His other gifts! what a wreck might yet ensue of all the chartered rights and divinely attested privileges of the children of the kingdom!—Nor is it to any class of men that the cares of this restraining Providence are restricted. They embrace, as the common bounty of Nature, the righteous and the unrighteous, and descend, like the rain of heaven, on the just and the unjust. Blasted as the earth is, and groaning under the weight of its iniquities, how much of “the wrath of man” is restrained, how many lawless designs are frustrated, how many are the crimes conceived more than those that are perpetrated? The worst of men, in the worst of times, fulfil but a part of their diabolical designs, and far outstrip, in the volitions of a depraved imagination, all that the duration of human life, or the extent of human capacity, enable them to execute.

But there may be, among those whom I am addressing, some whose hearts confess no such oblique propensities as I have assumed to be common; who enjoy, in the world's language, the sunshine of a guileless breast, the blandishment of an unrepining conscience; who believe their general,

aims, and mental purposes, to be as upright and pure as their lives appear blameless and irreproachable; who hold themselves secured by the elevation of their sentiments and delicacy of their feelings, from such assaults and such degradation as we speak of; and who cannot, in sincerity, confess a dependence which they do not feel, nor ascribe to extraneous aid the praise which seems due, not to an effort on their part, but to the munificence of Nature in the construction of their characters.—There is nothing, my friends, to awaken surprise in the arrogance of these pretensions. It is an essential attribute of the degeneracy we ascribe to man, to invert the order of obligation and gratitude; estimating those benefits the least that have been the most liberally conferred, and the longest continued with us, and arrogating an unalienable right in those endowments which our efforts have been the least employed to obtain. Talents, reputation, cheerfulness of temper, success in undertakings, the favour of contemporaries, we see generally held as in *right of possession*, without any acknowledgment of Him who bestowed them, and used as the independent property of those who forget that they have received them in trust. But does not the *exclusion of God* that accompanies their virtues betray their spurious origin? If they bore affinity to God, would *He not be acknowledged* in them? If they were from above, would not their tendency be again heavenward—proclaiming, as well as working out, the praises of Him whose approbation is the criterion of all real excellence?

I would not disparage the worth of good qualities, often beneficial to society; yet, my brethren, is it not from virtues formed of these materials, fragile in their texture, as casual

and temporary in their duration, that vices of every dye, and crimes of every degree of atrocity, have their origin. Under shelter of favourable circumstances, they may last out the term of human life and stand the test of human opinion : but what is more common than their complete overthrow, even in the plenitude of their strength ? Let but the temptation be of sufficient force, and adapted with a fitness to the character, and the catastrophe is sure. How do those who, at one time, have soared in the lofty regions of aspiring intellect, at another, sink in the mire of low sensuality ! or have we not read of some, who, in time past, have professed a philosophic candour, and yielded an unbounded latitude to all opinions, or even who have revered good men and sacred authority—but who, falling a prey to interested policy or party rage, have become bitter and unrelenting persecutors of that greatness that obscured their own, of that more elevated excellence that seemed, with silent censure, to disparage their attainments ? History has preserved to us more than one Hazael, once shuddering at the imagination of imputed crimes, who, following the track of temptation, have overtaken all the enormities that once smote them with horror.

But nothing, my friends, so exposes the meagreness and poverty of this self-reared virtue, as its being brought into contact with the immutable, uncompromising law of holiness and truth. I have known those who had as good pretensions to the title *innocent* as any of us, and as much to glory in, were it appropriate to our circumstances to glory, of every amiable disposition and accomplishment, when met by God, and penetrated by His spirit-searching power, thrown at once

from all their elevation, their glories levelled in the dust, their moral loveliness consumed as by a wasting moth, and all their comeliness turned into corruption. It was not that they had lost a single trait of their former excellence, that their conduct was at all deteriorated, that men had anything whereof to accuse them more than before: No, but God had held a mirror up to conscience, and every phantom of delusion had taken flight. How odious, and worse than worthless, *then*, was every suggestion of comfort drawn from the innocence of their lives, from the purity of their conduct! How difficult often for them to draw a gleam of hope from all that happy Christians have told them of the love of God, of the tender mercies of a Redeemer! Surrounded with an atmosphere of offended omnipotence—a God insulted, despised, forgotten—a God above, within, around—God everywhere and God for ever—how was He to be escaped, or how propitiated? What has He to do to spare or to pity? Does He stand in need of their help? Can they requite Him? If He could forget the past, yet where were the future?—It is easy to serve God under the sunshine of His smiles; it is easy to find peace when He scatters it in our path: nay, “when He gives peace, who can create trouble?” but, oh, who can speak its eulogy, can declare its preciousness, to those who have known the burden of “a wounded spirit”—who have met God as “a consuming fire?”

Need I remind you who have known such sorrows, of that night of Egyptian darkness, illumined by neither sun, nor moon, nor star for many days; of the bitterness of those poisoned arrows that drank up your spirit—the night sought as a refuge from the day, and the day longed for as a deliver-

ance from the night ; of the dreams of that thorny pillow, of those convulsive slumbers—and, more, the cruel mockery of that infernal foe insulting his baffled and fallen victim, turning every sweet word from the page of life into a weapon of wrath, and mingling each healing draught with gall and wormwood ! And how nearly had he achieved his victory, and, Pharaoh-like, satisfied his lust on you, when, spent in the fearful fight, and sinking from the breathless conflict, he urged you to cease from the hopeless strife, to dare the deep abyss by self-destruction, and by one easy act to end the torment of suspense, and make that doom as sure as it seemed wretched and irrevocable ! O my friends, Satan guides with a pliant rein and gentle hand those who wear his yoke as willing subjects, disturbing him with no pretensions of resistance ; but fearful is the strife when the Spirit of God meets him as a foe, and the soul of man becomes the scene of their encounter. Need I remind you, “ye prisoners of hope,” of the joy of that dawning when “the day-spring from on high visited” your hearts, when God Himself broke off your fetters, flung open your prison-gates, and set you free ? Then was your heart “filled with laughter, and your tongue with singing.” Endeared to you beyond all remembrances, I need not strive to commend to your recollection the *time*, the *place*, where first He revealed His mercy, or urge you to erect there an altar to the God of your salvation. The chamber, the church, the field, the garden, the ware-room, the garret—wherever, however obscure or undistinguished, to you it was “none other than the house of God, the gate of heaven ;” and the time is that “to be much observed to the Lord ;” yea, “this is that night of the

Lord ;" for it was His, not your, hour of glorious achievement. Rich in the eternal, the imperishable blessing, you leave the glory to Him who won, and who gave away this victory.

Those who have gone through such extremities of conflict and of suffering are, doubtless, enriched with eminent discoveries of the power and depth of Divine grace, are endowed with a higher relish of their blessing, and reach sublimer strains of thankfulness. If by the kindest mercy we are spared such warfare, are reconciled to God and admitted of His peculiar family, let us adore in humble gratitude. It were presumptuous in us to wish to be advanced by such hazardous experiments as have not been appointed us. We may know enough of *self* to humble us in the dust, enough of *God* to make His grace unspeakably precious. And, oh, what mercy, if we are participants in that grace, adopted into that household of the blood-royal of heaven! Notwithstanding all our worthlessness, God does not despise or upbraid us. The Saviour bore our sorrows when He bore our sins ; and the pangs that rent that mighty heart are spared for ever to our weakness.

And you whose peace knows no molestation from fear, who judge your offences light, and that God must needs save you, oh think whether you owe your tranquillity to your safety or to your presumption ! I have endeavoured to shew you that there are two kinds of peace—the one solid, the other treacherous. If you have known no fears, or if you yourself have mastered them,—if you have satisfied yourself with the world's testimony in your favour, instead of that of the Searcher of hearts,—if you have little sought the momentous subject of

inquiry, and it have as little forced itself on your consideration,—if, in short, you are at ease without a struggle, happy without thankfulness, rich without self-impoverishing humiliation; if memory, among her stores, treasures up no time “of the right hand of the Lord” to be held in your everlasting remembrance—it is not for me to tell you to be at peace; nay, you are still in the enemy's territory, in the land of Egypt. Haste, flee, stay not in all the plain; the night cometh, and the avenger of blood is behind you. I leave these things with God and with your consciences.

IV.

THE WEeping PENITENT AND THE DISDAINFUL
PHARISEE.

“And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee : go in peace.”—
LUKE vii. 50.

THE passage before us refers to one of those incidents of private life which, in the history of eminent men, are often more interesting and more illustrative of character than their more public acts. It presents our Lord, neither in the temple, nor in the city, nor on the mount, but in a domestic circle, under a private roof, reclining at table in the Eastern fashion, when a stranger, drawn by an attraction she cannot resist, ventures to approach Him, and by the most significant actions expresses her reverential regard. The kindness with which He permitted her offices of love, though fully aware of the sinister construction put upon them by uncandid observers,—the mild dignity with which, when her zeal drew down a rebuke, He vindicated her conduct, and, tracing it to its genuine motive, presented her as an example that might well put to shame those who despised her,—the grace with which he said, “Thy sins are forgiven,”—the majesty with which, when the expression occasioned new murmuring, he confirmed it, saying, “Thy faith hath saved thee : go in peace,”—are circumstances beautifully illustrative of the character of

Christ, and fitted to give the kindest encouragement to all who seek His help. It is not, however, to the personal character of our Lord we would now attend, but to the illustration here given of the *way of salvation*, and of the *fruits and indications* of genuine grace. May God Himself, by His Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds on these all-important subjects, while, connecting the text with the foregoing narrative, we set before you, I. The *principle* to which our Lord attributes her salvation; and, II. Its gracious and blessed *effects and evidences*.

I. The principle to which our Lord attributed her salvation was her *faith*. This was the medium through which the blessing was conveyed, and this was indeed the secret spring of all her proceeding. The assurance He had given her, that her sins were forgiven, had offended some who sat at meat with Him, and suggested the contemptuous inquiry, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Without noticing the reproach cast on Himself, our Lord re-assured her of the precious truth, and at the same time reminded her that the blessing was obtained by *faith*—that is, by a simple dependence on the mercy of God revealed in His Son,—was to be referred to Divine grace, and held as the gift of infinite love. Now this view of the matter was equally fitted to silence the cavils of the objectors and to establish her own confidence. For if her sins were many and great, the way in which salvation was communicated to her implied no denial of them, no attempt to extenuate them; but, on the contrary, a full and free admission of all their enormity, and an entire transference of her confidence from herself to her Saviour. And

whatever charges her accusers might bring against her, she was not concerned to answer them; nor did the fullest demonstration of her guilt lessen the certainty of her salvation, since this rested on the sure foundation of her Saviour's power and grace. Her *faith* saved her: for what she had not in herself she found in another; and the confidence she could not place in herself she reposed securely in Christ.

And in what way, we ask, could this individual have been saved except *by faith*? As for salvation by *works*, that was out of the question in her case. She was *a sinner*, as the Evangelist testifies; and therefore, instead of being justified by *the law*, was convicted by it as a transgressor. But, moreover, she was a *notorious sinner*, as is intimated in the words of the Pharisee: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is *a sinner*"—one whose touch was dishonour, whose friendship was infamy, who had not disguised her shame, polluted and polluting; and this our Lord did not deny, intimating that her sins had been *many*, and that she had need of *much* forgiveness. What was there then that could save her? Her *relation to Abraham*? That she had virtually renounced, and by advancing any plea on that ground would only have convicted herself of apostasy. The *comparative innocence of her early years*? That innocence, whatever we may suppose it to have been, could have furnished no apology for her after guilt, rather would have aggravated the depth of her degradation. The *sacrifices of the law*? These had no power to purify the conscience; nor could "thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil" have washed away a single stain. Might her *repentance*,

then, have saved her, and her diligent efforts after *reformation*? Alas, the convictions and terrors of a guilty conscience furnish no propitiation for sin, and have in them more of fretfulness and irritation than of submission and loyal obedience. And as for the feelings of *broken-hearted contrition*, of *genuine love*, of all *true devotion*, these are the *fruits and evidences of mercy already experienced*; and therefore, instead of saving the soul, they shew it to be already saved. This is the light in which our Lord places the ardent love of this woman. After enumerating the expressions of her affection, he says, at the forty-seventh verse, "Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little:" where, you remark, he represents her *much love*, not as the cause, but as the consequence and evidence of her forgiveness; her love, as compared with that of others, being proportioned to the extent of the benefit she had received. But view her before faith came, what, we ask, could have saved this fallen, miserable sinner? Who sees not that she must *look abroad* for help—having no power to help herself, and renouncing all hope in herself, must transfer to abler hands than her own the mighty task of rescuing her from the overwhelming burden and resistless tyranny of sin? Sinking in the deep waters, without a plank to rest on, what could she do but seize, with eager grasp, the Almighty Hand stretched out to save her? Her faith saved her as accepting the blessing freely given her of God. Uniting her with the Saviour, it invested her with His all-perfect righteousness, and gave her *peace with God*; embracing the promises, it secured the fulfilment of them; giving glory to God,

it brought down from His throne abundant communications of grace—being the principle which, honouring God, *He* delights to honour.

Now, my brethren, it is precisely in the same way we must be saved, each one of us. Think not that forgiveness was extended to this woman by an arbitrary act of the Saviour, implying a departure from the general analogy of the ways of God ; or that in saying to her, “Thy faith hath saved thee,” He pointed out to her a way of salvation different from that which is available for others. This is the way in which the redeemed of the Lord have ever walked, the only way that can lead us to heaven. If saved at all, it is your *faith* that must save you. In despair of effecting your own salvation, whether by your merit or by your power, your trust must be placed in that Saviour whom God hath provided. It is probable that, among those I now address, there is no sinner so notorious in infamy as this woman. It is *not* equally probable that there is none so great in guilt. If you question this last assertion, I must remind you that we are very erring judges of our own character as compared with others, since the measure of culpability is dependent on innumerable circumstances of which it is impossible for us to estimate the influence. Perhaps the unfortunate before us, born and cradled in tents of wickedness, had from infancy breathed a pestilential air which could not be inhaled without contagion—perhaps, destitute of all advantages and restraints of education, without friend or adviser, she had fallen a prey to wicked influence, and been entangled in snares she had no power to break through; while *you*, hedged about with providential checks and parental protection, could not, if you

would, have escaped into the paths of open vice : and yet, having hardened your hearts against the Gospel, and rejected the gracious offers of the Saviour, you may fix on yourselves a criminality which, though not attended with such a blot on the character, or such poignant stings in the conscience, may plunge you in a deeper gulf of guilt and alienation than hers in the estimate of *Him* who reads the character in the heart.

But, waving unprofitable comparisons, I ask whether you are not a *sinner* in the sight of God ; whether your sins are not *many* ; whether you need not *much* forgiveness ? You are too well instructed to answer, in reference to the commandments, "All these have I kept from my youth up ;" or to make it a matter of glorying that you are "not an extortioner, or unjust, or an adulterer"—to set your virtues over against your failings, or to appeal to the *world's* standard for the character you are to present to God. The question is not what you are in your own eyes, or what you are in comparison with others ; not what man thinks of you, or how you have fulfilled the relative obligations of common life. The question is betwixt *you* and *your Creator*. Have you, as being His offspring, "loved Him with all your soul, and mind, and strength ?" Have you devoted yourself to the great end of your being ; denying and forgetting yourself, as a creature should do, that God might be glorified, and seeking happiness only in the accomplishment of His will ? My brethren, does not the slightest view of our obligations on the one hand, and our performances on the other, force from us the patriarch's confession, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me : if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. If I wash myself with snow-water, and make

my hands never so clean ; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me."* But if we cannot be justified by works, then it is *by faith* that we must needs be justified ; there is, and can be, no other way ; that which we have not of our own, we must receive as dispensed to us by Divine favour. For, throughout the Scriptures, salvation is presented to us as the *gift* of grace, not as the wages of our obedience. To obtain possession of wages, we must address ourselves to our prescribed work, and persevere till it be accomplished ; but to appropriate a gift, we have only to accept it : this is all that is required here—our acceptance of it makes it ours, and gives us a right to enjoy it. A hired workman must perform his task, and in consideration of his doing so, he justly claims the stipulated payment ; a beggar, who subsists on alms, has no claim, but with outstretched hand *receives*, and thus *appropriates* what you bestow. Now, though in relation to men, he who works for wages is the more honourable character, and is profitable to his employer, yet in relation to God we must confess ourselves beggars ; yea, insolvent *debtors*, who, though owing ten thousand talents, have nothing to pay with, and must accept salvation as the gift of infinite goodness. Thus it is *faith* that saves us *instrumentally*, whoever we be, in our accepting the blessing freely offered us, even that Saviour who hath redeemed us at the price of His precious blood.

And this view of faith refutes the notion of those who, from a mistaken zeal for morality, ascribe the saving efficacy of faith to the *moral excellence* of this principle as implying submission and obedience ; for this is to make faith itself a

* Job ix. 20, 30, 31.

work, and to ascribe salvation to ourselves in performing it. But in Scripture, salvation by faith is constantly *opposed* to all idea of *desert* on our part; for “to him that *worketh* is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on Him who justifieth the *ungodly*”—that is, one in himself ungodly—“his faith is counted for righteousness.” We appropriate a gift, we have said, by accepting it; but does this acceptance *merit* the gift? Faith saves us, not because there is anything in it to *deserve* the blessing, but because God has appointed it as the *best* and *most righteous* means of conveying salvation; since it would be inconsistent with the Divine wisdom to grant the blessing to those who will not accept it, who trample it under foot, and are incapable, in the nature of things, of enjoying it; and therefore, my brethren, in the ministry of the gospel we offer you salvation as a free gift; we ask no previous *merit* or virtue on your part; but, be you *who you may*—a sinner of whatever description, of whatever magnitude—open your heart now honestly to receive the grace freely presented, and it is *yours*: it has not become less ample or less efficient in the triumphs that have marked its progress in the revolution of so many centuries; and to you the Saviour will say, “Thy faith hath saved thee.”

II. Having said this much of the nature of faith, it is fit we proceed, secondly, to consider its gracious and blessed *effects and evidences*. For while faith saves us simply as receiving the Saviour, it is not to be forgotten that it is an *intelligent, holy, and powerful* principle: *intelligent*, as implying a just apprehension of man’s state and of God’s

character; *holy*, as being the "gift of God," and the first fruit of His regenerating grace; *powerful*, as bringing us under the influence and authority of those great truths which it is its essential character to embrace. For let it not be thought that in matters of *religion*, those laws that regulate intelligent natures are reversed, or that any such strange anomaly can exist in the spiritual world as a soul that *believes*, yet neither *feels* nor *acts*.

But instead of general language, behold the genuine effects of faith exemplified *in her* to whom our Lord addressed the words before us. We are not expressly informed of the manner in which she was led to the faith that saved her. But since "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," we cannot doubt that she had heard the word of truth and life from the lips of Jesus: that word had penetrated her heart, and, convincing her of sin, had at the same time made her acquainted with the grace that pardons it. Subdued by Divine power, her heart had lost its obduracy; and, though smitten, and wounded, and mortally *pierced* by the *sword of the Spirit*, she felt a healing balm ministered by the hand that had wounded, and wondered at the grace that had awakened her from spiritual death. She was now drawn by an irresistible attraction to this Divine Saviour, to pour out on Him some token of a gratitude too big for utterance. Understanding that He sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, she found her way there. There was nothing obtrusive in her deportment; for though her zeal was not repelled by the presence of the guests, whom indeed she seemed to forget in her absorbing affection for the Saviour, yet her conduct shewed her to be "clothed with humility;" and

mingling, it is likely, with the attendants, she presented herself in the attitude of a servant, prepared to fulfil with joy the humblest office. Jesus reclining on a couch, she stood at His feet behind Him: but could she stand there without weeping? Admitted into that gracious presence, into close contact with her Deliverer, her feelings refused restraint; remembrance rushed upon her—her past life—mercy, free, large, un hoped for—an overwhelming blessing! Could she be too sure of it, or have it too often confirmed? Hers was no feigned emotion, no premeditated act of zeal. Prostrate, with tears in streams that ceased not flowing, she supplied Simon's lack of service. Veiled by her dishevelled locks, she washed and kissed those honoured feet, bedewing them with costly ointment. Nor knew she, till her devotion met its high acknowledgment, that her love exceeded, contrasted with the coldness of many, and even went to the heart of Him whose approval was the highest of all rewards.

And was there at the table a heart unmoved, an eye that could look with a frown on so interesting a scene? How does pride blind the mind and deprive it of all spiritual sensibility? "When the Pharisee that had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner." Our Lord, answering to his unuttered thoughts, proved Himself a prophet, and by His mild expostulation set before him, we trust for his conviction, as well as for the confirmation of His rejoicing penitent, the reason why his own love was little, cold, and restrained, while hers was full and overflowing. "Simon," said our Lord, "I have somewhat to say unto thee,

And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." The Pharisee, it appears, had neglected those expressions of courtesy and kindness that were customary in the society in which he lived: how did the fervent and generous love of this penitent put to shame his frigid civility? And was it not an evidence of the grace she had received? "Wherefore," continues our Lord, "I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Our Lord represents her much love as an evidence that she had had much forgiven; for it was reasonable to conclude that her gratitude bore some proportion to the benefit received: "but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little,"—a feeble sense of obligation awakens a feeble return of love.

My brethren, the graces observable in this woman are the natural fruits and proper evidences of faith, wherever it is found. The peculiarities of her situation could affect only

the mode of expressing them. Is not *penitence* a natural and necessary effect of faith? I speak not of those convictions and alarms that may agitate the unrenewed mind; which, springing from a selfish source, are attended with a disposition rather to extenuate our sins than to mourn over them—but of that *godly sorrow* that feels the bitterness of sin as committed against God, and that sinks in deep abasement in the presence of His purity. Such sorrow indicates the existence of that faith which saves the soul. For faith and repentance are twin brothers, produced in the order in which we have announced them. In order of *time*, they are coincident and inseparable; for as there can be no *impenitent believer*, so neither can there be any *unbelieving penitent*; but in order of *nature*, since the discoveries of Divine truth are the means of awakening repentance, it is manifest faith must precede it, to give these discoveries effect. And more particularly a believing apprehension of the mercy of God is necessary to produce in the soul a true sense of the evil of sin as committed against a God of infinite love. For while the heart is estranged from God, it is not in the nature of things that we should be much affected with sin as an offence against Him, or in any other way than as exposing us to punishment. We do not inwardly regret the offences committed against a power which we cannot but regard as hostile to ourselves, save only as these offences may expose us to the visitations of a resentment we cannot resist. But if we find that that sovereign power is also our *best and only friend*—is, in short, *our* God and Saviour, whose love has anticipated our want, and provided salvation for us at an infinite cost, how does the condition change!—the mind opens to a view

of the odiousness of sin, and the heart is smitten with a sense of its baseness and ingratitude. Such is that evangelical sorrow foretold by the prophet: "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn."

And faith, ushered in by contrition, has *love* for an inseparable associate. It cannot be otherwise. For having respect to the highest benefit, from the most exalted quarter, conferred on the least deserving, and where it was least expected, coming too an *unmeasured blessing*, with an unbounded *future* for its enjoyment—can it fail to *fuse down* the soul into one element of admiring gratitude and all-absorbing devotedness? It is as if a shrinking criminal, ashamed to appear, were called from the crowd by a most gracious sovereign—were clothed in new apparel, embellished with dignity and beauty—told not to fear, for that his offence was cancelled—that by a surprising reversal in his character and circumstances, he was become specially acceptable, endeared, and qualified for station and employment about his prince, and was free of all risk from envy, reproach, or change of fortune! What could he think when he felt himself in possession of these advantages—meet for the society in which he is called to move—pure and elevated in sentiment—sharing with his new associates the common enthusiasm for their glorious king and deliverer, to whom all stand in the same relation? For all were, like him, lost, and are recovered—all, now vigorous in life that knows no mortality, have been rescued from death, from the grasp of an enemy who opens not the door of his prison. What human affection, my fellow-Christians, is equal to the fire of the first love, awakened by a new life, and melted with a sense of most unmerited mercy?

What ointment do we possess so precious that we should not delight to pour upon His feet? And since we cannot reach the *Head*, which is in heaven, let us manifest our regard for the members of *His body* yet upon the earth. If we can shew mercy to the poor of His flock—if we can succour or comfort those who are reproached and persecuted for His sake—if we can assist in promoting His cause in the world—if we can commend His gospel to others by shewing its influence on ourselves—if there be any service, any sacrifice we can offer, let us not withhold a tribute which, however mean in itself, He will accept as grateful and fragrant ointment.

Those by whom such new principles are most vividly felt, and most unequivocally expressed, are least disposed to take credit to themselves for possessing them; for their profound sense of their personal unworthiness, and of the infinite claims of their Saviour, renders all they do mean in their own eyes. The precious declaration addressed to this woman, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," expressed a truth of which, though she fostered the *hope*, she till that moment, I apprehend, lacked the *assurance*. To uphold such penitents, is the special office of the Saviour. And if there be any in this assembly under the influence of these principles, any whose contrition of heart and love to Christ indicate their union with Him, though accompanied with weakness and fear—to each of these the gospel authorises me to say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" and, in spite of the cavils of unbelief, to add, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." What *peace*, "passing understanding," did not these words convey to her to whom they were here addressed! How did they "shed abroad the love of God in her heart," diffusing a sense of it over her

whole soul! Her fears relieved, and every doubt dispelled, she left the presence of the Saviour, still to "abide under the covert of His wings, to dwell in the secret of His tabernacle." Treasuring the assurance of *peace* in her heart, she went to her house, to tell what great things God had done for her, and to invite others to the enjoyment of the happiness that had now taken possession of her heart and whole being. And if you, like her, believe in Jesus, I say to you, "Go in peace." Let the guilty soul "take hold of my covenant," saith the Lord, "and make peace with me, and he shall have peace;"* peace which many temptations, afflictions, and infirmities, shall not be able to destroy. "Let this peace rule within thee;" let it "keep thy heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

But if there be those who take offence at the free grace of the gospel,—who cannot, without secret murmuring, see it extended to characters whom they hold in contempt,—who judge themselves deprived of all their just distinctions if that favour, which they consider as due to them, be gratuitously bestowed on such as these,—who deem heaven itself depreciated, so that their pride refuses to accept it, if publicans and harlots be admitted there—O that they would take the lesson appropriate for them in the narrative; for may we not appeal to them, whether on common principles the penitential sorrow, the ardent gratitude, the *much love* of such converts as they despise, afford not clearest evidence, both of the riches of *grace*, which is God's instrument, and of its efficacy and adaptation to those who receive it; and also, whether the coldness of their own love, the for-

* Isaiah xxvii. 5.

mality of their services, the grudging reluctance of what they would call their benevolence, be not an evidence that they have had little experience, either of its pardoning virtue or of its quickening power? "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." If our Lord be supposed to admit, in the way of gratuitous concession, that Simon's sins had been forgiven, He unquestionably reproves his most inadequate apprehension of the measure of mercy his case required. But does He not rather intimate that He was altogether destitute of the blessing; that, in the language of another similar expression, he was "the least in the kingdom of heaven," having indeed no part in it? For where the debt is *great*, a *little forgiveness* will not meet the necessity of the case. Unhappy those who, in pride and self-confidence, conclude that they have *little* to be forgiven! Woe to the man who imagines that the "innumerable evils" that have compassed him about can be removed by a *few* pardons, his *much guilt* by a *little forgiveness*!

My brethren, it is the glory of the grace of the gospel, that it enfolds the chief of sinners; and blessed are those who are enabled, as chief of sinners, to embrace this gospel grace. "This," said the apostle of the Gentiles, "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom," he added, "*I am chief*." Why is it so hard to come to Christ in this character? Are we more righteous than St Paul? Do we scorn to receive mercy on the same terms with him? It may be that, in the view of Him whose eye penetrates every bosom, whose Spirit searches and tries every impulse of the soul, some one sinner may stand pre-eminent above every other;

some one wretch, concentrating in himself all vices that can meet together, to pollute the life and deprave the heart of man, may stand distinguished above other sinners—*the very chief*. We do not suppose that that individual is here. But why is it that each of us does not appropriate the character to himself? Ah, could we search within, throughout those chambers of imagery that nurse in obscurity so many hidden abominations; could we discern with a conscience enlightened, and acute, and penetrating, as the Spirit of the Lord, the alienation of heart, the mental rebellion, the base ingratitude, the contempt and abuse of most condescending mercy, that have marked our behaviour to God; could we detect the deceitful principles, the pride, the selfishness, the envy, the cruelty, that have shared in our conduct toward our fellow-creatures—we should find little to congratulate ourselves upon in a comparison with even “the chief of sinners:” nay, rather, taking into the estimate all that we can know of the other, be he who he may, our hearts would press on us the conviction, “I am the chief.” Seek to know yourselves in that character, that you may explore the depths of mercy, and be beautified with the grace of the salvation of God. Seek to attain eminence in love. “He that hath much forgiven, the same loveth much.” Let me not be thought to bring an indiscriminate accusation. There are many here, I doubt not, who have *within* them the testimony of a good conscience, and who bear, *without*, the evidence of their Christian character in a humble, consistent, holy walk. Yet let my words be for *warning* and for *confirmation*. Let me charge you, from the least to the greatest, singly as in the sight of God, “*prove your own selves*.” Let no one take his

Christianity upon trust; “know your own selves, whether Christ be formed in you.” It is a safe thing, it can do you no harm at least, to know your state. To those who are unconscious of the evil and guilt of sin—who have never felt their danger, or asked the way of life—the reiterated assurances of the Saviour’s love will be monotonous and uninteresting; but you who have known anything of the necessity and value of salvation, will not fail to derive encouragement from the example here set before you of His condescension and grace. Do not then distrust His love, or hesitate to give Him full possession of your souls. Let a crucified Saviour be the object of your confidence; and to you individually, I repeat, He will say, “Thy sins are forgiven, thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.”

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V.

THE REPROACH OF CHRIST.

“Let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”—

HEBREWS xiii. 13.

THE government of opinion is more extensive and more absolute than the government of force. Force, violently employed, awakens resistance and provokes opposition; but opinion, widely prevailing, silently insinuates itself into the mind, and, before we are aware, gives a bias both to our judgment and to our affections. The blow aimed by the arm of force we easily discover and endeavour to parry or retort; but the influence of pervading opinion steals imperceptibly upon us, like that of an infected atmosphere which we cannot breathe without inhaling contagion. Force, when most successful, can only impose an external restraint; it may immure the person, may chain up the limbs, may silence the tongue, but the mind remains free, and, for the most part, is even confirmed in its principles by the violence employed to subdue it. Mind only can act upon mind; but when the minds of men are united in one way of thinking and of feeling, they carry the power of a mighty overwhelming torrent, on which we are borne along, like a straw on the surface of the waters, as without means of resistance or escape. Who can forbear admiring what all men admire?

Who can preserve a feeling of veneration for that which all men unite in despising?

Now, unquestionably, the influence thus exerted on the mind of an individual by the united minds of his fellow-creatures, or of the great majority of those with whom he is surrounded, is often productive of good. A respect for prevailing opinion is one chief means of deterring men from those sins and crimes which are of ill repute among mankind, and of exciting them to the practice of the virtues which are held in general estimation. This principle deters them from absurdity and caprice, from the expression and display of arrogance, of selfishness, of gross impurity; it excites to diligence, honesty, and truth. But, notwithstanding this admission, we still maintain that the influence of prevailing opinion is often highly pernicious. Men are erring creatures; the majority are not unfrequently wrong; the wise, the great, and even those who pique themselves on their morality and piety, and are the guides of others, are often in error. And error especially prevails on the subject of religion: on this subject the mind of fallen man is, to a great extent, buried in ignorance and perverted by prejudice and pride. To take prevailing opinion for our guide here, would be as absurd as to ask of a company of rebels the character of the sovereign against whom they have risen in arms; as foolish as to commit ourselves to the guidance of a blind man in a road leading along dangerous precipices, or in a voyage amid threatening rocks.

In addressing a Christian audience, I need not go far in quest of proofs or illustrations of these observations. Look at Him who was "fairer than the sons of men;" who was

entirely free from sin, and was adorned with every virtue ; who was eminently distinguished, not only by piety, faith, and purity, qualities which should command our admiration, but by compassion, beneficence, unbounded generosity—graces fitted to attract our love. Look at the Son of God in human nature—behold, “ He was in the world, and the world knew Him not ”—“ He was despised and rejected of men ”—He was “ the reproach of men and the contempt of the people ”—“ The kings of the earth took counsel against Him ”—the judges condemned Him, and the multitudes demanded His crucifixion. Again, contemplate that gospel which He revealed—its doctrines, its precepts, its promises ; how worthy of God—how perfectly adapted to the circumstances of man—how pure, beneficent, divine ! Yet this gospel, before and after the resurrection and ascension of its Divine Author, was rejected by the Jews, was despised by the philosophers, was persecuted for ages by the Roman government ; and, even at the present day, it deserves to be considered whether its spirit and its power be not disliked and opposed by the far greater number of those who claim Christianity as their religion. Are you followers of a crucified Saviour, and will you shrink from suffering ? Are you professors of the doctrine of the cross, and can you be alarmed at reproach ? Surely no. Listen to the animating exhortation of the apostle—“ Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate : let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” Jesus, the great propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world, in conformity to the typical representation on the day of atonement, suffered without the gates of Jerusalem. This circumstance inti-

mated to the Jewish converts the necessity of departing from the temple, and separating themselves from the Jewish priesthood, if they would enjoy the blessings of a better sacrifice than the ceremonial law provided; and it no less clearly intimates to *us* the necessity of abandoning the principles and prepossessions of the carnal mind, and the practices and habits of a sinful world. The apostle requires us to join ourselves to the Lord with the fixed resolution of cleaving to Him to the end, regardless of the world's opinion, fearless of its displeasure. We must go to Him in *faith*, as the only sin-offering, renouncing every other means of justification; we must go to Him in *love*, as the chosen of our souls, abjuring as idolatry the love of the world; we must go to Him in the *spirit of obedience*, as our rightful Lord, abandoning everything inconsistent with His will. Yes, we must quit the camp of the enemy—must cast away the weapons of rebellion—must put on the armour of righteousness—must “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” But if we do this, we cannot expect to escape reproach from those who remain behind. We indeed return to our rightful Sovereign—we obey the highest obligations—we follow the dictates of truth and honour; and every step we take relieves our souls of the burden that pressed upon them, and inspires us with increasing hope and joy; the light of Heaven shines upon our path, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. But all this will not appease the malignity of those who still remain in the hostile camp. They of necessity will view us with displeasure, and will endeavour by every means to draw us back, or not succeeding, to inflict some painful if not mortal wound.

By the expression, "his reproach," the inspired writer may be understood to intend, either, generally, the contempt which attends Christ's cause in the world; or, more particularly, reproaches and afflictions of the same nature with those which our Lord Himself endured. The two ideas are closely united. Our Lord "was in all points tempted like as we are," and the reproaches we are called to bear are such as He Himself endured. I proceed to specify a few of them. If we go forth to Him without the camp, we must be prepared to bear—

I. *The reproach of singularity.*—It must be admitted, that in going forth to Jesus without the camp, we separate ourselves from the majority of mankind. The religion of Christ required, in those who embraced it, a renunciation of their former opinions and practices. It required the Jews to abandon the temple and the altar, and all those distinctions in which their supposed superiority had lain—to adopt a new and spiritual form of worship—to enlarge their views—to expand their charity—to feel themselves sinners no less than the Gentiles, and to embrace these Gentiles as brethren—to do all this in opposition to the example and authority of the priests and Pharisees, their oracular leaders. It required the Gentiles to renounce their idolatrous worship, to forsake their preconceived opinions and tolerated vices, to change their whole manner of life, and to unite themselves to a sect that was everywhere spoken against. But you will say, "Times are changed—Christianity is now universally professed—we may certainly hold to it now without incurring the charge of singularity." I answer, You may be nominally Christian

without incurring this charge, but you will scarcely escape it if you be at all times what real Christianity imports. For though a multitude which no man can number, has gone forth, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, to Jesus without the camp, still the camp remains full, and the followers of the Lamb, there is reason to fear, are in every age comparatively few. We cannot join ourselves to Christ without being in some degree singular—that is, different, essentially and observably different from the generality.

The real Christian is singular in respect of his *faith*. He embraces with genuine conviction the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. He is convinced of the sinfulness of his nature—of the misery of his once unrenewed state—of the impossibility of salvation but by the blood of Jesus—of the necessity of regeneration—of the insufficiency of human efforts to purify the heart—of man's constant dependence on the grace of God. The ordinary professor is often ignorant of these things: he views them as mystical or as non-essential; at best, he yields them only a cold and heartless assent, "for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can know them, because they are spiritually discerned:" while he who goes forth to Christ without the camp has a deep inwrought conviction of their truth, attested by his conscience, and glowing in the emotions of his heart. His faith compels him to renounce the opinions of the great majority of the wise, and learned, and noble of this world—the theories wrought out often by acute and penetrating intellects. His language is, "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

Again, the real Christian is singular in respect of his

affections. The glare of worldly greatness does not dazzle his eye; the allurements of worldly pleasure do not seduce his heart. He sets his affections on heavenly things. To enjoy the favour of his God—to hold communion with his Saviour—to obtain brighter discoveries of His excellence—larger communications of His grace—these are the objects of his desire and delight. He is singular in respect of the *judgment he forms of men and things.* The world bestows its admiration on the proud, the prosperous, the vainglorious, the restless but successful candidates for wealth and power—characters which he is compelled to condemn. The world approves of a prompt resentment of injuries, an eagerness to revenge them, a determination to humble an adversary—dispositions which he regards as the offspring of an unrenewed nature. On the other hand, the qualities he esteems are those which the world despises—humility, forgiveness of injuries, self-denial, watchfulness, prayer. He is singular in respect of his *outward conduct*, and particularly in his conscientious care to avoid sin and the occasions of it—in his abstinence from many gratifications in which others indulge—in his solicitude for the good of souls and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. It is not a needless singularity we plead for, but that singularity which consists in avoiding the sins of the world and fulfilling the will of God.

The degree in which the Christian will be regarded as singular will, of course, depend on the society in which he is called to move. Among the religious, he may escape the imputation; but if surrounded by those who are strangers to real godliness, his character cannot fail to be the subject of observation and criticism. And the charge of singularity is

not easy to be borne. It requires a considerable strength of principle and constancy of faith to hold on our way when we find few to encourage and many to discountenance us. But let us remember that God has pledged Himself not to forsake His people; and the season of difficulty is that when He peculiarly manifests His favour. How noble the singularity of Noah! Firm as a rock abiding the buffetings of the ocean, he stood unmoved amid the tumultuous contempt of the people. And how generous the singularity of Moses! "By faith, when he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." Every age furnishes examples of some who have forsaken father and mother and sisters and brethren for Christ's sake, and have not failed of their reward. In every true Christian, according to his position, this holy singularity will be found. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

But why speak we of singularity? There are reproaches of a far severer kind. I mention—

II. *The reproach of illiberality and bigotry.*—The exclusive nature of the Christian's faith, and its implied condemnation of every other form of religion, was one of the first and principal objections it had to encounter in the minds of the ancient Gentiles. The various religious systems that prevailed in the heathen world, though differing from one another, were not inconsistent; for as the presence and authority of their deities were restricted to particular countries or departments of nature, the gods of one country did not

interfere in their claims with those of another. Accordingly, the Romans, when they extended their conquests over the world, admitted the gods of all nations into the list of their divinities, and erected temples for them at Rome. But the Christians, advancing an exclusive claim to the possession of the truth, in worshipping the one God denounced as vain idols the deities of their neighbours. Their holier rites and purer services condemned as impure and sacrilegious the superstitions of the Gentiles. Adopting a peculiar rule of life, they shunned with abhorrence the sins and crimes practised around them. It was this that irritated the adherents to the popular belief. They asserted that though no other crime could be laid to the charge of the Christians, they deserved all the miseries that could be inflicted on them on account of their unnatural, censorious, and obstinate bigotry.

Is not a similar reproach still cast on the *faithful followers of Christ*, not only by the sceptics and infidels of the day, but by those professors who have no sense of the importance of evangelical truth and the necessity of holiness? What is the language of such men in reference to those whose principles and practice are stricter than their own? "You hold," say they, "opinions of a peculiar cast, and you condemn the rest of mankind differing from you. You live in a particular way, and you stigmatise all whose habits are different from yours. Narrow-minded, illiberal in sentiment, censorious in temper, you see through an atmosphere of your own, and suppose that other men are blind. You take a path for yourselves, and imagine that other men have lost their way; and, not content with criticising, you doom them to destruction." Is not this the language of the world? Now I do

not deny that illiberal sentiments may often be found among those who profess religion. If men require what the gospel does not require—if they prohibit what it allows—if they confine their charity to a particular sect or denomination—if they make religion depend on external circumstances and minute distinctions—if, in any case, they indulge a capricious, uncandid, or unmerciful spirit—they are unquestionably illiberal and bigoted, and deserve to be so designated. But if our sentiments be really formed on the Word of God, let us not be terrified by a name. Perhaps you are branded as illiberal because you insist on the necessity of faith, of repentance, of regeneration—because you will not comply with the lax morality and selfish prudence of the world—because you will not conform to the world in its sinful amusements—because you cannot admit that those who act not on the principles of the gospel, and are not conformed to its standard, can be either virtuous in their character or safe in their state. Now, what says the Word of God? “He that believeth hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” “Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” “Come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing.” Has not Christ said, “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it?”* Is not this a declaration which, in the mouth of any other person, would be branded as illiberal and uncharitable? But it is given, as all

* Matt. vii. 13, 14.

our censures and reproofs ought to be, with holy zeal, from tender compassion and solicitude to preserve men from self-deception in a matter of infinite importance. If we adhere to the Word of God, we may well neglect the charge, and may say to those who accuse us, as Moses to the Israelites, "Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord." *That* deserves not the name of candour which makes no distinction betwixt truth and error, betwixt holiness and sin ; *that* is not to be charged as illiberality which adheres with reverence to the declarations of inspired wisdom, and disclaims every other standard of judgment. But illiberality is not all. We must be prepared to bear—

III. *The reproach of hypocrisy.*—This reproach was cast on our Lord himself ; for He was accused as a deceiver of the people, and was condemned on the charge of falsely and sacrilegiously laying claim to the character of the Son of God, hypocritically assuming a mission and dignity which did not belong to Him ; and, in a similar spirit, His people, in every age, have been treated with the name of deceivers and hypocrites, pretenders to a character they do not possess. "Behold, this dreamer cometh," said Joseph's brethren ; intimating that they considered his dreams, not as a Divine communication, but as fabrications of a vain heart. David's more serious spiritual exercises excited such animadversion—"When I chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach." And where is the child of God that has not had some experience of this contempt ?

There are many who would persuade themselves that there is no religion in the world higher than their own ; they treat

every appearance of it as mere affectation or designing hypocrisy, or, if they profess a greater degree of candour, superstition and fanaticism are the mildest terms they can bestow. Ignorant of the principles by which believers are really actuated, they can attribute to them only such principles as are known to themselves. And their conjectures are as wide of the truth as would be those of a rude savage judging of the feelings and proceedings of civilised men.

It is curious to observe how small a portion of religious profession will, in certain circles, bring upon you this reproach of enthusiasm or hypocrisy. If, from motives of conscience, you refuse to waste your precious hours at the card-table—if, from a dread of the infectious influence of idle conversation, and the alluring display of the world's varied vanities, you avoid the scenes which endanger the simplicity and purity of the mind, and decline the theatre and midnight revel—your scruples are *treated* as the offspring of a weak, contracted, conceited mind. If, in addition to these symptoms, you become more regular than before in the observance of public worship, if you read religious books, if you attend to the exercises of devotion in secret and in the family, if you discover some anxiety for the spiritual welfare of others, some zeal for the extension of the kingdom of Christ—you are pitied as the victim of morbid melancholy, or branded as a self-righteous, sanctimonious hypocrite. What a variety of terms have been employed to turn the faithful servants of God into ridicule! The name *Christian* itself, as that of Puritan in modern times, is thought by some to have been originally a term of reproach, applied by the Gentiles to the followers of Jesus. Afterwards, when this appellation was joyfully acknowledged

by the disciples, they were contemptuously styled *Nazarenes* and *Galileans*, as Christ himself had been before them. In the present day, the more modern appellations of *Methodists*, *Evangelists*, *Saints*, and a large vocabulary of similar expressions, supply the place of these ancient terms of reproach. But amid all the misrepresentations of the profane, true religion is still the same: and it deserves to be considered whether the Methodists, the Saints, the Evangelists of the present day, be not really the true successors of the *Christians* of the first centuries.

IV. *The reproach of presumption.*—The believer ventures to maintain that peace may be had with God, that consolation may be found in a sense of the Divine favour, that substantial joy may be felt in the hope of heavenly bliss. But this doctrine, encouraging as it seems, irritates the minds of those who will not care for any of these things. Aware that all is not right with themselves, but utterly averse to serious self-examination, they soothe their minds by contending that the soul's position, in reference to God and eternity, is a thing of which we must necessarily remain in doubt, and that all pretensions to any better peace, or firmer hope than they themselves possess, are fanatical and presumptuous. Least of all will they allow that those whom they despise as comparatively ignorant, or view with disgust as enthusiasts and hypocrites, enjoy the favour of God and the riches of heavenly blessings. The charge of presumption was thus brought against our Lord himself; for the chief priests, mocking, said, "He trusted in God, that he would deliver him; let him deliver, seeing he delighted in him." If, in mixed

society, you introduce your sentiments in conversation, or endeavour, however modestly, to engage attention to them—if you speak reverently of sacred things, insist on their Divine authority, and invite others to embrace them, nothing is deemed more out of place, ill-mannered, and presuming. But is it indeed presumption to honour God, to stretch out a hand with the kind wish to save those that are ready to perish?

V. *The reproach of licentious principles and immoral practice.*—Even this reproach, monstrous as it is, our blessed Saviour did not escape. He was stigmatised as “a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber,” was accused as a “blasphemer” and “deceiver,” and was charged with a confederacy with the devil. We need not wonder that His gospel, and those who embrace it, should share the same reproach.

By a perverted representation of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, they are alleged to promote immorality and licentiousness. For instance, the doctrine of justification by faith without works, it is said, takes away all obligation to good works, and leaves men at liberty to live securely in sin. But here I would have you consider, that in order to determine whether we ought to embrace this doctrine, the direct question is, whether it be revealed and declared in the Scriptures; and it may be easy for us to decide on the scriptural *evidence* of a doctrine, while we may mistake in calculating on its tendency. I cannot at this time enter on a discussion of the subject, on which I know many of you are well instructed, further than to refer you generally to the Scriptures, and particularly to the Epistle to the Romans, where the

apostle professedly treats of a sinner's justification before God. But if this doctrine be contained there, let us take heed how we suffer it to be accused of an immoral and licentious tendency, as the charge, in this case, comes against God himself. Can anything that proceeds from Him have a tendency to pervert the mind, or corrupt the manners? Such a charge advanced against the gospel, in this its prominent and remarkable characteristic, is brought against the Holy Spirit, and against all those holy men whom He inspired. Was St Paul, I would ask, the advocate of immorality? Never, from the foundation of the world, has there been a more strenuous asserter of justification "by faith without works," than that zealous apostle; but can it be said that his teaching encouraged immorality, or that his practice countenanced it? Let not those, then, who *now* teach and hold to this doctrine, be assailed with this reproach; for rightly apprehended and embraced, we know that it has a directly opposite tendency, being the fountain of all consolation, the spring of joy, the principle of obedience; which, holding Christ as our Restorer, and the medium of all blessedness, engages our love to God by the deepest obligations, and provides effectually for our delighting in Him and walking in the way of His commandments. Are not the very persons who are accused of favouring immorality, by inculcating this doctrine, charged at the same time with unnecessary strictness in their lives? We appeal to their conduct as affording the best illustration of the moral bearing of their principles. We are confident it will be found, in fact and experience, that those who most affectionately and zealously cleave to Christ, renouncing their own works in the matter of justification, do

also abound in good works much more than those who hold the opposite opinion. Indeed, it may be remarked that the opposers of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel do themselves bear an involuntary and undesigned testimony to their practical tendency, by always requiring in those who profess them a peculiar exactness of conduct, and by eagerly seizing on any apparent departure from the path of strict duty as a proof of inconsistency. What is this but a testimony from the mouth of adversaries to the purity and holiness enjoined by the doctrine they seek to condemn? We readily admit that the cause of true religion has suffered exceedingly from the inconsistency, immorality, and licentious lives of many nominal and pretended Christians; but these are not the persons on whom, in general, the reproach falls, but are rather of the class who cast the reflection on those whose purer characters serve to condemn them. And if any who profess the doctrine we have been maintaining, be indeed immoral in their practice, we readily abandon them to the severest reprehension. Let not, however, the doctrine be condemned, but the men who "hold the truth in unrighteousness."

VI. *The reproach of disaffection to government.*—This charge, too, like others, fell upon our Lord. He was accused of making himself a king in opposition to Cæsar. And a similar charge we find, ever and anon, brought against His followers. How shall we account for this? Certainly, of all men, real Christians are the most peaceful, faithful, and useful members of society. Whence comes it that they are so often accused of disloyalty or disobedience, and are so liable to fall under the displeasure or suspicion of the ruling powers?

I answer, the charge of disaffection is sometimes brought against them in consequence of *their courage in condemning sin*, and reproving it even in the highest situations ; as when John the Baptist censured Herod. It was this which so often exposed the prophets of old to the charge. This provoked Ahab to call Elijah the troubler of Israel, and to say of Micaiah, "I hate him because he always prophesieth evil and not good concerning me." And a similar courage in denouncing the judgments of God against the Jews exposed Jeremiah to the charge of falling away to the Chaldeans. Again, the charge of disaffection has often been brought against them in consequence of *their preferring the commandments of God to those of men*. Daniel's enemies were convinced they could find nothing against him excepting in respect of the law of his God, and so endeavoured to find the means of placing the law of the king and that of God in opposition, well knowing to which he would adhere. Again, in consequence of *their hatred of injustice and oppression, and their regard for civil and religious liberty*, Christians have often found it their duty to vindicate the rights of conscience, and to assert the privilege of avowing and practising what their conscience required, even when its dictates have opposed the oppressive edicts of men. Sometimes the charge has been brought against them in consequence of the *changes* they have been instrumental in effecting, though altogether for the better ; thus it was said of Paul and his companions, "These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also ; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." Finally, this charge has often been brought forward in malignity, merely

for the purpose of stirring up enemies to the gospel, and weakening the cause of truth.

Other reproaches might be mentioned, and afflictions without number. But were we to enter into a detailed view of the sufferings of Christ's faithful servants for the testimony of Jesus and the maintenance of a good conscience,—of the deprivations they have endured, of the hunger and thirst, of the tortures, pains, and deaths,—the subject would be overwhelming both in its extent and in its demands on our sympathy and commiseration. Yet all these we must be prepared to endure, if the Lord should appoint them.

I now ask, are there any here present who join at times in the reproaches cast on the followers of Christ? I appeal to your own consciences, whether you be not sensible of the unreasonableness, of the sinfulness of this conduct? Look into the motives that actuate you. Is there not in operation a secret dislike of serious religion, an inward aversion to the doctrines and precepts of the cross, something like heart enmity to God and to Christ? Are you not inwardly convinced that there is a reality in religion, and that its genuine and consistent disciples are acting the wise and the happy part? Hypocrites there may be, but are *all* hypocrites? As well might you say, that because there are counterfeit pieces, there is no sterling coin in the land. There may be presumptuous persons, but are there none that are humble, upright, sincere? Consider your position. Christ regards as done to Himself what is done to His followers. "Take heed, lest haply ye be found even to *fight against God*." Look forward to the final account. What shall then be the language of the scornful? "We fools accounted his life

madness, and his death dishonourable ; but how is he numbered among the saints, and has his place with the sons of God?"

But we forbear threatening. Ye are all dear to us for Christ's sake. There are none of you that lie open to the faithful warnings of the Word to whom its gracious invitations do not apply. Be persuaded to join yourselves to the followers of the Lamb. Many who have once reproached, have afterwards confessed the faith. Some who have been persecutors and blasphemers have preached the faith they once destroyed.

And for you, my friends, who desire to go forth to Jesus without the camp, you see for what you must be prepared. Before the Israelites went to the battle, a proclamation was made, "Is any man fearful? let him return home again." In similar language I may address you. But are you willing? While aware of the difficulty and danger of the path, do you, in the foresight of all, take Christ for your guide and leader? Then be encouraged. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." I have mentioned some of your trials ; I must not enlarge on your encouragements ; but you know the more reproach you bear, provided it be indeed for Christ's sake, not the effect of your own folly, imprudence, and self-confidence, the more blessedness will you obtain. "Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you." It is the reproach of Christ : bear it with patience : "render not evil for evil, nor railing for railing;" but "bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you:" so shall it turn to you for a testimony. Remember that saying, "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword; for I am come

to set a man at variance with them of his own house." Let it lead you to the Saviour for support and consolation. Let it teach you to retire from the world, and hold frequent communion with your God. Let it be received with humble joy. It is the reproach of Christ—this is the consolation—of Christ, the Son of God, the Lord of glory. To be counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake, is the believer's highest honour ; that he has borne it, will be the joy of his soul, his comfort in affliction, his solace in sorrow, his triumph in death. Prize it above the highest honours that man can bestow, for "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." And "the light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

VI.

THE MINISTER OF CHRIST,

EXEMPLIFIED IN THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE

REV. THOMAS GROVE.

PREACHED ON OCCASION OF HIS DEATH.

“ Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel ? ”

—2 SAM. iii. 38.

DEATH is an affecting event, and cannot be contemplated but with awe. The death of even the meanest individual is interesting, as summoning an immortal soul into the presence of its Judge, and reminding us that we ourselves must soon appear before God. The death of “a prince and a great man,” especially of one possessing that personal greatness which does not descend by inheritance, is a still more striking event, and awakens deep and universal concern. But the death of a genuine and exemplary Christian, who, having finished his course on earth, is translated to the bright regions above, is associated with considerations yet more interesting to all who share in his hope ; and while his friends on earth mourn their loss, or console themselves with the thought of his gain, angels rejoice in conveying his spirit to Abraham’s bosom, and introducing him to the joys of the

Father's house. Above all, the death of a faithful and successful minister of Christ, who has not only "adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour," but been the blessed instrument of "turning many to righteousness," is an event of still wider interest. "Precious in the sight of the Lord," and affecting and instructive to the Church on earth, "is the death of his saints."

The appellations made use of in our text, taking them in that sense which will naturally suggest itself to a spiritual mind, could be applied to few individuals with more propriety than to that eminent servant of God, to whose decease I alluded in the morning, and to whose memory I feel impelled by peculiar motives to pay my tribute of respect—the late Rev. Thomas Grove. He was a prince with God, and prevailed to obtain His richest blessings; he was a prince with men, and prevailed to subdue their opposition and lead them in fervent penitence of heart to the Saviour. He was a great man in Israel; great in faith, great in zeal, great in love, great in achievement. In a former discourse, from another text, I pointed out what might certainly be considered as the grand and leading feature of his mind—a deep and abiding sense of *the love of Christ*. "*The love of Christ constrained him.*" I shall, this afternoon, endeavour to give you a somewhat more particular view of his character. Distinguished examples of the power and grace of God are not to be passed over in silence. St Paul, on different occasions, renews the account of his own memorable conversion, as illustrating the power and compassion of Christ. The book of Acts presents us with specimens of the effects of the work of the Spirit in different individuals. We do not therefore

depart from Scripture precedent, in occasionally calling our hearers to take note of signal instances displaying the efficacy of Divine grace, especially in those who have "spoken to us the word of life," whom we are commanded to remember, that we may follow their faith. I shall begin by briefly noticing some of the leading events of his life, shewing the course of Providence in his case, and the way in which he was led to the varied scenes of his labours in the ministry—the ground on which he ran his race, and the fields on which he fought his battles.

Deprived in early life of both his parents, he had not the advantage of a religious education ; and the frankness, generosity, and ardour of his character, made him very acceptable to youthful companions and worldly friends. I have heard him remark the great goodness of God in preserving him from those vices which often ensnare the young, and with which he himself was, on some occasions, particularly assailed. But though amiable in disposition, and honourable in conduct, he was, till about his eighteenth year, a stranger to God and to true religion. He was first awakened to serious thought by a work, which I the more willingly mention, because it has been blessed, from time to time, to many souls: "Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted." This little book, given him by a friend who first exacted a promise that he should read it, roused him from the security in which he had lain, and awakened a poignant conviction of the sinfulness and misery of an unconverted state ; till, unable to bear the wounds it occasioned, he threw away the weapon which inflicted them, and endeavoured to banish the recollection of it from his mind. This, however, he found to be impossible ; he was

forced to return to this impressive volume, which was now, by the Spirit of God, made the effectual instrument of leading him to a thorough conversion. For some months the anguish of his soul was unabated ; a sense of his lost and guilty state oppressed his mind ; sleep fled from him ; his health was materially impaired ; and in a moment of desperation, in the anguish of his spirit, he had fixed on the means and provided the instrument of his own destruction, but was happily rescued from this temptation. It was while passing through these deep waters, that he obtained those views of the enormity of sin, of the misery of the unconverted, of the "wrath of God against the unrighteousness of man," which he afterwards so often presented, with the most overpowering effect, in his public ministry. At length, after a season of severe discipline, such as those only are made to pass through who are destined to peculiar eminence in the school of Christ, the Lord visited him with the expressions of His mercy ; and the light of the morning was as bright and glorious as the shades of the night had been deep and overwhelming. His soul received an impression of the sovereignty and preciousness of Divine grace, which was never effaced ; an assured and delightful sense of the love of Christ, which extended its animating influence over his future life, and prepared him to make every sacrifice, and to endure every cross in the cause of his Saviour. He now attached himself particularly to the ministry of Mr Whitfield ; and, notwithstanding the disparity of their years, a kindred spirit knit them in the bonds of peculiar friendship.

A love of *horses* and horsemanship had been among his youthful predilections ; and at this time it was his delight, in

the twilight hours of the early summer morn, to ride the forty miles that lay betwixt his residence in the country and the Tabernacle in Moorfields, to hear Mr Whitfield preach, at six in the morning and throughout the day. These were precious times with him. He never failed to feel richly requited and strengthened to meet the crosses and opposition that assailed him during the week by these Sabbath-day refreshments.

Constrained by the love of Christ, it now became the desire of his heart to devote himself to the work of the ministry. With this view he entered St Edmund's Hall, in the University of Oxford; and here, meeting with five other students animated with similar principles, they became warm friends, encouraging each other both in the pursuit of their studies and in attempts to awaken a spirit of serious piety in a scene which, however distinguished by learning and science, was at that time exceedingly destitute of the light of the gospel. It was their custom, on the mornings and evenings of the Lord's day, to read the Scriptures, and to pray in those families of their acquaintance which were friendly to such exercises, occasionally addressing those who might be present in a few words of exposition or exhortation. These exercises, so suitable in themselves, and so honourable to those who engaged in them, gave rise to proceedings which awakened a great sensation in the religious world. An individual from whom it might least have been expected, informed against these six young men as transgressors of *college rules*. They were summoned to appear before the University—were tried in the presence of the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houses—and, notwithstanding the most honourable testimony to their

character, diligence, and proficiency in their studies by the Principal of the College, notwithstanding the efforts of some individuals of highest respectability in their behalf—these young confessors, for the simple act of reading, praying, and expounding the Scriptures *in private*, were, on the ground of alleged irregularity, expelled the University for three years. I may add, as a memorable circumstance, that the individual who so unworthily accused them, instead of obtaining the advancement he had anticipated as the reward of his zeal against Methodism, was, at the very meeting which pronounced their expulsion, publicly dismissed by his superior from the office he held in the University, and he passed the short remainder of his life in circumstances of merited depression and contempt.

This act of public censure, calculated to wound the feelings and injure the prospects of young men aspiring honestly, though with diffidence of themselves, to the work of the Lord, was not without its effect on the ardent but sensitive mind of my friend. He was led to question his call to the ministry, and to suppose, for a season, that the door was shut against him. The zeal of faithful and approving friends, however, was roused in his behalf, among whom I may mention the venerable Dr Secker, then Archbishop of Canterbury, who strongly urged him to persevere in his views of entering the Church of England. Nor did he entirely abandon these views till he was insensibly led by Divine Providence to a different sphere of labour. Returning to reside at his estate in Berkshire, he was affected with the circumstances of the poor around him, whom he found as “sheep not having a shepherd;” and was impelled, by his concern for their

souls, to invite them to come on the evenings of the Sabbath to his house, where he instructed them in the things of the Lord.

Numbers were by his efforts awakened, and led to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. He felt embarrassed at times by his own success, hardly knowing what course he should advise them to pursue. Young and old, sacrament people of standing, flocked around him. He told them repeatedly that he had declared to them what he himself had been taught—that his message was delivered, and he had no more to say; but they continued to assemble, and to hang on his lips for the word of life, which was not to be had in the churches or neighbourhood around them. He continued friendly intercourse with his parish clergyman meantime; and, hoping good influence, would ask him to return with him from church to dinner, and hear what he had to say to his people in the evening. This, however, did not prove the Lord's way of building up His Church in that place. The people clung to him who had first put in his plough and sown his seed among them; and a great number being truly drawn to the Lord, he did not leave them till he had formed them into a congregation, provided them with a chapel, and settled over them a faithful pastor, who strengthened and carried them on in the way so prosperously opened before them.

After a couple of years spent in these interesting labours, Mr Grove was visited with spitting of blood, and other symptoms of the disease which had carried all the other members of his family to an early grave. This set aside all idea of a more regular course of preparation for the ministry,

but awakened in him new zeal for the work. If early death was to be his lot, he longed for nothing so much as that his brief course should be wholly and signally an offering made to God ; and while using all prescribed remedies and means of sustaining health, he could not be induced to relax his pulpit efforts but on the most urgent necessity. The case that human skill could not determine hung long in the balance. He was not appointed to die at that season, but to years of useful labour ; and though he was often a sufferer, and never attained to robust health, his public work suffered small interruption from concern for his health, or care bestowed by him on personal gratification.

Become well known among the class to whom he now belonged, he was induced to accompany his friend the Lady Glenorchy to this city ; where he officiated for about eighteen months in the chapel which bears her name. In this new sphere his labours were very abundant, and were attended with a commensurate blessing. There are many still living who were then given him as the seals of his ministry ; nor can I convey an adequate conception of the interest and affection which his ministrations, glowing with holy fire, kindled in the breasts of multitudes. Some idea of his usefulness may be formed from a fact communicated to him, after his leaving Edinburgh, by the Rev. Mr Plenderleath, minister of the Tolbooth Church—that on one occasion he admitted to the Lord's table no less than thirty young people who ascribed their first serious impressions to his preaching. And when he was led, by the combined influence of conscientious motives and early attachments, to resolve on exchanging the sphere of his labours in Scotland for the

more varied scene which England presented to him, it was with the greatest difficulty and severest conflict he tore himself from a sorrowing throng, in many of whose hearts he had gained a chief place, as the first and most endeared link betwixt them and the Saviour. And though he had, as much as his feelings permitted, taken leave of them from the pulpit the night before, his house was filled at the hour of his departure, four in the morning, by numbers who sought of him still the last expression of love. I need not add, at least to many of my hearers, that his visits on several occasions to this city have been eminently seasons of refreshing from the Lord.

Against his taste and choice, but led by a marked overruling Providence, he was next settled at Rotherham in Yorkshire, as pastor of an Independent congregation ; and as he had undertaken the charge under a strong impulse of duty, and with a soul devoted to the service of God, so it pleased the Lord to crown his labours with great success, and to make him the instrument of turning many to righteousness. Besides his stated labours in his own congregation, which he prosecuted with unceasing earnestness, it was his custom to preach on week-days, and to make preaching excursions in neglected districts of England and Wales, where, in season and out of season, he addressed the gathered followers before and after work on week-days, many times in the course of a week. The reception he met with was various—love and gratitude from many : at other times he was treated, as Mr Whitfield phrased it, “like an apostle,” being assailed with abusive language, clods and stones, and even with more deadly weapons, as was not unfrequent in these days. On one

occasion, when earnest in his discourse, a man of notorious character was seen riding up furiously on the outside of the crowd with a loaded blunderbuss to discharge at him ; when happening to brush rudely against another man of character like his own, a scuffle ensued betwixt them ; they carried off their fray to some distance from the believers' camp, leaving the better disposed in peace : and the occurrence, under Providence, seemed to rivet the attention and engage the respect of the multitude that remained, so as to render the season one of peculiar interest and benefit. Many opponents were made friends. At one time a woman in London, who had benefited by his ministry, was very desirous to have her husband brought under the same influence, and had him to come with her to hear Mr Grove. The enmity of his heart was, however, aroused, and he protested with passion that he would never, on any account, hear that man again. His wife gave way to his disgust ; but after some time proposed to him to go and hear another minister, who, she hoped, might prove more acceptable. The crowd was great ; they were wedged in ; and contrary to her expectation, Mr Grove came up to the pulpit. The indignant husband looked reproachfully toward his wife, thinking this a device to entrap him. She convinced him that she had no such intention, that Mr Grove's appearance was as contrary to her expectation as to his, and proposed that they should withdraw. This, however, they found it very difficult to do, and the husband preferred remaining where he was till the service should be over. And this time an arrow of conviction found its way to his heart ; he was melted, subdued, fairly arrested and changed ; and from that time, effective believing prayer being answered,

he and his faithful partner "walked together as heirs of the grace of life."

I mention these out of numberless instances of the effect that attended his more distant labours, while in his home sphere he had many conversions, and was also instrumental in forming new congregations in destitute localities. Uninterrupted success, however, is not the portion of even the most zealous of the ministers of Christ. After passing several years at Rotherham, he found his usefulness declining, and saw a spirit of formal religion and worldly-mindedness extending its influence over many in his flock. This was a trial peculiarly severe, and his conduct under it affords a striking illustration of that decision of character which marked all the movements of his life. His attempts to revive the decaying zeal of his people, to bring back the "first love" and the "first works," having proved unsuccessful, he determined, under Divine direction, to terminate his connexion with them, and no longer to cultivate a soil that seemed to have lost its fertility under his hand. When this resolution was announced to his congregation, it awakened all their tenderness, and called forth the most earnest remonstrances and entreaties. His affectionate heart was almost broken with the conflict: yet having formed his resolution, he saw it his duty to abide by it, and by this severity of purpose, no less than by the earnestness of his exhortations, he re-animated many who had become lukewarm, awakened others who had not before been concerned, and left an abundant blessing behind him.

The next year of his life was spent in London, without

any particular pastoral charge. From the time of his settlement at Rotherham, he had been in the habit of supplying for six weeks every year the large congregations assembling in the two places of worship which were the great scenes of Mr Whitfield's labours in the metropolis ; and now, in addition to frequent preaching in these places, he found himself called to a succession of arduous services which his fervent spirit would not suffer him to decline, but which were manifestly impairing his health and breaking up his constitution. This circumstance concurred with other motives in inducing him to accept an earnest invitation to take charge of a congregation in Walsall, Staffordshire, which he superintended during the last twenty-five years of his life. The same zeal, diligence, and success which distinguished his early years, continued to mark the progress and decline of his life. His labours increased instead of diminishing. For many years he passed three months annually in London, and one in Bristol, preaching almost every day to large congregations. These periods he used to consider as his reaping time ; his labours were greatly blessed, especially among the young, to whom his ministry was always eminently attractive. And this continued till about nine years ago, when a severe and lengthened domestic affliction prevented his long periodical absences from home. It is, however, a pleasing proof of the faithfulness of his Saviour, that when restrained from the larger spheres in which he delighted, he had the happiness of witnessing a great increase of serious religion in his own congregation. And to that favoured flock he continued to hold forth the Word of Life, preaching regularly three times on the Sabbath, and once in the course of the week, besides

watching over the members of his Church, till within a few months of his death.

In the character of my venerable friend there was a singular union of energy and affection. His understanding was sound and vigorous ; his discernment quick and penetrating ; his feelings were ardent, his attachments warm ; his plans were formed with decision, and executed with activity ; he pressed forward with earnestness to the object in his view, and felt a restless impulse which yielded not to repose, while anything remained to be done to secure it. But the ornament and glory of his character, was the habitual and visible influence of the power of godliness. A sense of the presence of God seemed habitually to possess his mind ; an impression of eternal things rested on his soul ; an animating feeling of the love of Christ sustained and invigorated his exertions. The Word of Christ “ dwelt in him richly, in all wisdom : ” his every sentiment and feeling seemed to be regulated by it. Having derived his knowledge of religion, not from human systems, but from the Word of God and the teaching of His Spirit, his own experience furnished the most satisfying comment on the nature and influence of the grand doctrines of the gospel. Without neglecting those assistances that are afforded by the writings of pious and learned men, he yet loved to draw the pure water of life from the fountain of inspiration, rather than from the cisterns in which human industry has collected it. And, living under the influence of the truths he preached, his whole conduct and conversation manifested him to be a child of God, and an heir of the heavenly inheritance.

It were not easy to convey to the minds of those who never

heard him, an idea of what he was in the pulpit, where he came forth a master of assemblies. His appearance was commanding ; his countenance expressive of the solemnity and tenderness of his heart ; his voice, at once powerful and melodious, conveyed a strong impression of his meaning. In entering on a discourse, his language was usually simple, concise, and sententious ; as he advanced, he became more and more copious, animated, and energetic. His statements of doctrine were clear, decided, and powerful ; his appeals to the conscience forcible and pungent ; his invitations free, fervent, and animating. His favourite and constant topics were the grand and peculiar truths of the gospel ; and whether he searched the human heart and laid open its deceitfulness, or exposed the misery and danger of an unconverted state, or enforced the demands of the law, or proclaimed the method of reconciliation and the grace of the Saviour, he spoke from that profound conviction and tried experience, which enabled him, by manifestation of the Spirit, to "commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Preaching the gospel was as his necessary bread, from which scarcely any pressure of bodily pain or personal danger could deter him. This was his scene of action, where the deep realising views of eternal things that filled his own soul found expression ; where the earnest wrestlings of his heart obtained relief by being communicated. He spake that he might be refreshed. Impatient of repose, and weary of forbearing, he felt the Word of God within him as "a fire consuming his bones." A *Boanerges*, mighty in the Scriptures, he wielded, in the strength of the Lord, "the sword of the Spirit," and plied, with irresistible efficacy, the

artillery of heaven. It was not the electrifying shock of eloquence ; it was not the power of hushing the mixed multifarious assembly under a deep simultaneous impression, that answered his aim, or upheld him in his labours ;—it was when God was at work in his efforts, as He often manifestly was—when Satan’s empire seemed shaken—when the “arrows of the King were sharp in the hearts of His enemies, and the people fell under Him.” O that the Lord would so appear among us by whatever agency, and grant us one of these days of the Son of Man ! “Where is the Lord God of Elijah ?” If it were given me to convey to your minds, as to thousands of those who heard him, an impression of “the terrors of the Lord”—of the abandoned wretchedness of those who encounter His wrath—of the hopeless desolation of those who trust to their own righteousness ; if I were commissioned, like him, to make you feel what it is to be smitten, wounded, heart-broken, under the Word of God—to wrestle as for life till “Christ be formed in you,” and God Himself take up your cause ; or if, like him, I could unfold to you “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” the treasures given and sealed to believers in the promises ; if I could inspire you with an ambition to possess the sublime character of *sons of God*, heirs of the kingdom, of the blood-royal of heaven, or awaken in your breasts a generous zeal to “live no longer to yourselves, but to Him who died for you”—how precious would be our reward ! How well should we have exchanged carnal tranquillity for heavenly blessedness ! What new discoveries of love and joy would surprise those who so long have come, and retired from these seats, insensible as the deaf adder, having a form of godliness while dead to its

power—admitting the truth, yet perishing under the sound of the gospel ! These were sights that made the heart of the man of God of whom I speak hot within him. None who heard him doubted his solemn conviction of the truths he spake. Spent in the service of his Master, his life was not accounted dear to him. He was ready to impart, “not the gospel of God, but his own soul also,” so precious to him were the souls for whom he laboured. And in return, the hearts of multitudes clave to him with a love which only such heaven-formed characters inspire.

In the whole of his ministry his great aim was to convert sinners ; and he seemed resolved, whatever else might be forgotten, never to forget their urgent claim. Their conversion, however, did not satisfy him. When a sinner was brought to Christ, he viewed him as only entering on his race, or going down to engage in the battles of the Lord. He was eminently qualified to assist believers in their work and warfare—to guard them against the wiles of the devil—to strengthen them against temptation—to quicken their diligence, animate their exertions, and teach them to bring forth “the fruits of the Spirit in all righteousness, goodness, and truth.” His views of the Christian character were high. He could not allow his hearers to “halt between two opinions.” He required them to “come out from among the disobedient, and be separate.” He considered conformity to the world as renunciation of Christ. Nor could he acknowledge as Christians many who make a creditable profession, and are regarded as religious by the world. Like the blessed apostle, he was “jealous over his children with a godly jealousy,” and was soli-

citous to present them in all the purity of faith and love to the Saviour.

But few in our time have equalled him in the fervour and spirituality with which he conducted the devotions of the sanctuary? He spake "as seeing Him that is invisible." He prayed with the humility of one who has deeply felt the evil of sin—with the earnestness of one entreating for life—with the importunity of a soul set on the attainment of heavenly blessings—with the confidence and affection inspired by the Spirit of adoption. He came in the name of Jesus, and "through Him had access by the Spirit to the Father." And even when the pressure of personal and domestic affliction at any time bore down the vigour of his mind, and rendered him less capable of energy in preaching, still there appeared in his devotions a solemnity, an affection, and intimate communion with God peculiarly fitted to rouse the soul to heavenly things.

I cannot dwell on the graces of the Christian character which adorned him in private life, when, descending from the high places of the field, he appeared among his friends in simplicity and humility, as loving their fellowship, but glorying only in the Lord. His faith was a firm, abiding principle, that seemed to allow him no time for trifling. Life, he used to say, was short enough for work; eternity long enough for rest. Like the other earnest ministers of his school, he was an exact economist of his time, rising regularly at five, and securing three morning hours in his study, free from the unavoidable interruptions that the day brings with it. With feelings of the purest kind, his soul was peculiarly formed for the exercise of Christian

friendship ; and while he called forth the warmest affection in those who were admitted to his intimacy, he never failed to repay their love by a generosity and kindness that excelled, and left them his debtors. Nor need I describe the tender and unceasing affection with which he watched over the best-beloved and faithful partner of his life, during many years of pain and sickness ; nor the patient resignation and thankful acquiescence with which he endured many heavy strokes of personal and domestic affliction.

His term of travail in the church of Christ extended over near half a century of incessant labour, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings and sufferings ; while his personal trials, though often poignant, were scarcely felt for that which pressed on his heart—the work of the Lord and the care of the churches. This term at last drew to a close. It had been his wish, early in his career, to die at his work. The prospect he then had of early death urged on his exertions. His life, if short, he wished at least to comprise something done for God ; and the more pressing the danger, he was the more earnest to make use of each opportunity which appeared as if it might be the last. It pleased his heavenly Father, however, to preserve his life, and support him through much bodily suffering, to the allotted threescore years and ten. The last time he entered the pulpit in March last, he went through the service with great effort and with a voice scarcely above a whisper. He was obliged to be carried out, and was soon on the brink of the grave. He then saw that his public work was done, and that God called him to suffer His will in silent submission—which he had always found a harder exercise of faith than serving Him in the labours of the gospel.

The thoughts of his beloved people were much on his mind. He twice again was able to appear among them, in administering the Lord's supper, but was much overcome by his feelings, particularly when he said—"My dear friends, I had little thought to meet you here again, but had hoped before this time to have tasted of the *new wine*, in my Father's kingdom." He continued, after a temporary restoration, to sink fast, his soul re-animated with livelier hopes the nearer he approached his rest. His letters, expressive of the faith, ardour, and fervent affection of his heart, were ever very precious to me. The last I had, penned by his hand, was dated the fifteenth of August, and is as follows—

" WALSALL, *Augt.* 15, 1817.

" MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—I am now about to attempt to write you a few lines for the last time. My disorder has made such rapid progress that I am now upon the brink of the grave. Blisters, leeches, medicines, have all failed, and I am now in the hands of the Almighty Physician, waiting to be made whole. He makes my bed in my sickness. I can sit up but very little. But all is well. Christ is precious; He indulges me with the consolations of His covenant, and promises not to leave me comfortless. I look forward with joyful hope. All my concerns with the people are given up and settled. I thank you and dear M. for the most affectionate and faithful friendship. It will soon be increased. I am glad that I served the Lord in his work as long as I was able, though with much fear and trembling. He pardons all my infirmities and sins. As the chief of sinners, I come to the blood of Christ. Precious blood! My dear, as you

may suppose, is very ill. To be left!!! She joins with me in kindest love to dear M. and yourself. Pray for me as a dying man. Remember me kindly to Dr Buchanan and Dr Davidson. Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season. May the Lord bless and prosper you. Farewell. I remain ever your faithful and affectionate friend,

“THOMAS GROVE.”

This blessed state of mind appears to have continued to the close of his life. One of his last expressions was, “I wish I could tell you all, what I feel and what I see; but it is impossible.” Upon one asking him to give a sign if Christ were precious to him, he replied with great emphasis, “Precious! yes, beyond expression precious.” Great restlessness came on, so that for some hours he was scarcely a moment still. With great difficulty he said, “Not impatient, but restless.” Nature was sinking apace; he felt his own pulse, and when he found it had ceased, clasped his hands together in an ecstasy, looked upwards, and expired. The last words he was heard to utter were, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” His death made a deep impression, not only on the godly but on the careless and profane. His congregation expressed their respect by voluntarily attending his funeral, and appearing next Lord’s day in deep mourning. And funeral sermons were preached, not only in his own chapel by his friend and fellow-labourer, the Rev. Mr Thorpe of Bristol, but in the Established Church at Walsall, and in Dissenting congregations of all variety and even of opposite principles.

My friend had through life a due share of those afflictions

with which God sees meet to exercise and purify His beloved children. For, not to mention the toils and perils of his public service, which were far overbalanced by the pleasure that accompanied them, he had many chastening visits of a more personal and peculiar kind. He survived, we have seen, the threatening symptoms of his youth, but severe headache and painful nights often followed his seasons of public exertion. He had the mournful office of following to the grave six children, the whole of his family, who died at different stages, most of them of the constitutional disease from which, by what might seem an intervention of Providence, himself had been rescued. It was mournful to see him again, as I saw him last, in his old age, burdened with the anxiety incident to the guardianship of ten grandchildren, who, by the premature death of his daughter and son-in-law, were left to his care. He bore all with a trustful submission, looking longingly forward, when the buoyancy of his earlier days was gone, to the coming hour of release from the scene of conflict. Mentioning his troubles briefly in one of his late letters, he closes saying, "But I shall soon go home, and the days of my mourning will be ended." The last nine years of his life present little else than a succession of toilsome days and wearisome nights, while amid personal indisposition his heart was often wrung by the sufferings of his dearest friend. These afflictions were approved as necessary to perfect the man of God, and they were also blessed to promote his public usefulness. I remember an instance. Being forced to rise in the night by acute pain, his wife, weighed down with sickness no less than with their common sympathy, happened to quote the passage, "We that are in

this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." He took up the expression, so suited to their circumstances, and preached from it the following Lord's day, when it pleased the Lord to give him two souls for his reward, who, as he afterwards learned, were then awakened by the application of these words.

In the consolations that bore him up under suffering we have an encouraging example of the faithfulness of the Saviour. He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" and my friend's experience and expression bore ample testimony to the efficacy and fulfilment of His promises—the consolation seeming to abound in proportion to the affliction that called it forth. The tongue that taught many is now silent in the grave—the ambassador of Christ is gone hence to give an account of his ministry—and in him many have lost their dearest friend, their best counsellor, their spiritual father. He has left a vacant place in their affection which no other can fill. But "we sorrow not as those who have no hope." We know that, being "absent from the body, he is present with the Lord." He sings the high praises of the Redeemer among the spirits of just men made perfect; he has gone to his rest, and will stand in his place at the last day. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

I feel, my friends, that it may have seemed out of place to bring before you in this way the character of one little remembered or known now by most in this place; and that in speaking of a dear and honoured friend I may have been tempted too far into the strain of panegyric—a thing to which the mind of my friend was ever specially averse. But for once *he* and you must both forgive me. I have lost his

animating correspondence, his refreshing exhortations, ever urging me onward in the work of the Lord, the place of remembrance he gave me in his daily affectionate prayers. His character is one which, among those I have known, and with the intimacy I enjoyed with him, has made the deepest impression on my mind, and one that, could I present it as it dwells depicted there, you could not contemplate without feeling powerfully convinced of the energy and excellence of the principle that gave it life.

It remains only that we be "followers of him as he was of Christ." May that adorable Saviour who called him by His grace make us partakers of the same heavenly calling; and grant us such supplies of His Spirit as shall enable us to glorify Him in all the labours and trials that may be appointed us—that at the close of life we may fall asleep in Jesus, and hereafter awake to the resurrection of the just!

VII.

THE FORLORN HOPE

"And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."
—Exodus xxxii. 31, 32.

BEYOND the precincts of the Bible we shall search in vain for such a character as Moses. Profane history has none such. The raw material of human nature, amid the infinitely varied modifications it undergoes, is incapable of forming such an individual; and the page of Inspiration, comprehending no juncture save that at which he appeared that demanded such a combination of peculiar attributes, has given us but one Moses. Others have been great, as the grace of God has distinguished them; and fashioned by the same creative power, have been as well adapted for the spheres which they were formed to fill and the parts they were destined to sustain; but the man Moses has had no second, no exact counterpart among his successors. There have been legislators, heroes, patriots, who have outshone their contemporaries in genius and in virtue, and who have earned the honoured title of *benefactors* from the human race. Some there have been, drawn from the bosom of contemplative retirement, as David from the sheep-cot and Elisha from the plough, who have

been raised to important stations, which they have adorned by their wisdom and rendered effective by their zeal ; but none like Moses, formed by God's gifts and designated by His peculiar providence to greatness, who have shunned the scene fitted for its development, and, while ardent and invincible in purpose, have renounced and relinquished advantages which men of the world would have sought as alone adapted to the attainment of their object. No one do we find so marked out for distinction, yet deaf to the suggestions of ambition, who waits to have his call to his office made as clear, and the way to it as direct, as the means employed must be pure and unimpeachable—none so furnished do we find, who would have thought that he could serve his cause no better than by waiting, through years of remote exile, the maturing of Jehovah's plans, and the silent and authoritative indications of His will.

He was one of those who had greatness forced upon him, not being capable of pursuing it—the meekest and most retiring of men by nature, while appointed the leader of a headstrong and rebellious multitude. Immoveable as a rock, courageous as David, where the honour of God was concerned, *his own honour* in the ordinary sense was not his care, and for it he seemed to have no sensibility. When God stepped in for its vindication suddenly, in the case of Aaron and Miriam, no appeal from him drew on the decision ; it seemed not his cause that was at issue. Deriving his reward still from his work, apart from the praise that attaches to such high deservings, his task might seem to a common understanding the heavier from the absence of those buoyant and ambitious ardours, whether of a mental or of a

physical kind, that so often come in aid of the spiritual energy of ordinary men. He thought as little of drawing his resources and encouragement from the acclamations of those perverse and discordant spirits with whom he had daily to contend, as from the juster award of posterity that has since honoured him, and through all coming ages will honour him, as a conspicuous pillar of the Church, and a luminary and ornament of the human species.

There is something touching in his first reluctance to undertake the arduous mission assigned to him, in the perverse humility that dwells still on its objection : " O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken to me : send by whom thou wilt send : " an objection arising from his profound sense of personal inability for an enterprise that impressed him with its sublimity and importance, and hindered him from duly appreciating the efficacy of that power which is best perfected in human weakness. Yet in this invincible modesty do we not discover what is allied to that genuine nobility of soul that oftenest rises to the highest elevation of human character ? In his pathetic complaint, " Have I conceived all this people ? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child ? I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me " *—in this complaint we see his growing sense of the difficulties of his situation, and of the importance that attached to every department of his anxious administration. Unlike those spirits that grow arrogant and contemptuous in honourable situations which they have sustained with success, *his*

* Num. xi. 12, 14.

was not the mind that deprecated the advancement of others to influence and distinction, or that claimed to be the sole organ of authority, and of the dictates of oracular wisdom. "Enviest thou for my sake?" was his reply to Joshua, who was offended with the apparent assumption by others of one of his master's appropriate offices: "Would God that all the Lord's people did prophesy, and that God would put His Spirit upon them!"

These are the men, my brethren, that are born for distinction; these the Judahs in Israel whom eventually all their brethren combine to praise. Happy those who learn to forget themselves, and to have God only in their eye! They have but once a choice to make, and one work only to do in the world. And shall not God acknowledge and recompense the grace which, flowing from Himself, turns its streams to Him again? Is it not fit that He should distinguish those who withhold nothing from Him; who achieve no honour that they do not cast forthwith at His feet? And how blessed the distinctions that are thus consecrated! How safely enjoyed, how surely multiplied in still enlarged fruitfulness! May it not be said that, for the most part, God finds not among us where to bestow His blessing? "Prove me now," He says, "if I will not pour out a blessing so great that there will not be room to receive it." But few have hearts to meet the bounteous proposal. We look around upon one another to inquire where are the men to do the work of the Lord; and too often we find them not. Where are the men so dead to self, so lost to the calculations of human wisdom, to be free and ready, the unembarrassed servants of the Lord? Our hearts are like the barren sands that consume the showers of

heaven. He cannot make us fruitful till He has reclaimed the soil. He cannot exalt us to the preferments of His service till we have brought Him the tribute of a profounder humility, of a more fervent and inwrought self-renunciation. For why should He take of our poverty to make others rich? It were perilous for ourselves were he to exhaust our shallow graces, to drain their torpid and feeble springs, and having blessed others by our means, to leave us empty and self-elated.

Look at another attribute of a heaven-formed character. Where among us are the men that have the gift of *intercessory prayer* in any measure like the Lord's servant Moses? Occupied still with our own wants, our souls still pressed by their first necessities, our hearts inconstant, our hope insecure, how little do we know of that holy boldness that still returns to a Father's complying ear, and, taught by the bowels and mercies of Christ, remembers, with its own, the desires and wants of all his suppliant people? Who are they, in a day of general defection and rebuke, that like Moses, uncontaminated with the sins, unseduced by the errors of their generation, find it their part to ascend alone into the mount, if peradventure they may make an atonement? Who are they, privileged with secret access to the court of Heaven, that dare present themselves in the breach, to obstruct the threatened purpose of Almighty vengeance, till God Most High, surrounded with sacred prevalence of prayer, hemmed in with barriers which love, reigning in omnipotence, has made impassable, seems to reconsider his designs, reverses the forms of speech, adopts the language of man in addressing his creature, and amazes us, as in the tenth verse of this chapter, by the expression, "Let me alone, that my wrath

may wax hot against this people, that I may consume them ; and I will make of thee a great nation ? ” What words these from Jehovah ! “ *Let me alone !* ” meant but to excite a more urgent, a more prevalent importunity. Does Moses obey the fearful injunction ? No ; obedient to the *Spirit*, the words even of God do not seduce him from urging the purpose of the Almighty will. He reinforces himself with new and more affecting arguments, as you see at the eleventh verse—“ He besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand ? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth ? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven ; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.” He finds that eloquence with God which he sometimes desiderated with the cold, censorious multitude, and he wins that victory which God had but reserved in order to confer it on his faithful intercession—“ The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.”

I hasten to dismiss the incidents of this extraordinary narrative. Not many days, you are aware, had elapsed since God had descended in fire on Mount Sinai, with such indications of His presence as had drawn, not only from the most reckless and insensible of His worshippers, but even from

brute earth and the unconscious elements, a trembling acknowledgment of His power and glory. But what are thunders and lightnings—the voice of the eternal trumpet rending earth's central caves, and swelling beyond the roofless vault of its horizon—Mount Sinai wrapt in the smoke, not of volcanic convulsion, but of heaven's ethereal fires—to hearts unmollified by subduing grace, unpenetrated by spiritual influences? Bodily excitement, superstitious terror, the tremour of nervous agitation had passed away. Moses had disappeared, and seemed to have carried with him, away from the faithless multitude, all the memorials of his authority, all the traces of his Divine commission. This need less surprise than admonish and humble us. The impressions must be fixed by God that prove more efficacious and durable. How do all external things, emotions and purposes, die out and perish in human bosoms, receiving their character from the mutable beings who experience them !

Moses, meantime, had left the world behind him. Beholding with reverence and devotion the insignia of a veiled Redeemer, he welcomed the presence that others fled from ; and, exalted to the communion of the third heavens, received strength to meet the disappointment that awaited his return to the camp. His intercession was made while his heart was yet warm with holy love, and elated with the unquenched ardour of seraphic communion. It is well it was not postponed till contact with the baser elements of earth, the ruffling energy of his righteous indignation, and the ruder duties of his painful magistracy, might have overwhelmed his soul, and taught him to regard the prayer that implored mercy as little less than hopeless presumption.

With a heart wounded and depressed, though immoveable, he returns to his post, fast by the holy oracle, where a ray of hope yet gleamed on him, and whence, if it failed, it was vain for him to retire in search of what was nowhere to be found. Few words sum up his brief confession. It offers no extenuating argument, no plea in mitigation of a righteous sentence. It says not a word about sincere repentance, or heartfelt contrition, or purposed obedience, or firmer and better founded resolutions for the time to come. He has measured the bounds of human capacity—he has sounded the depths and explored the springs of that innate perversity that makes the end like the beginning. He has come to the close of all his arguments. But one petition more presents itself as fit or possible to be offered when he may sit down with him who in after days exclaims, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” But what breathing passion, what agony of intercession, are comprehended in his unfinished ejaculation, “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin!” “*If thou wilt!*” There is the door at which his imprisoned hope waits its enlargement. There, in that mighty, illimitable *will* is locked up the decision that kills or revives, that entombs his hopes in their last sepulchre, or kindles them into life. “If thou wilt, thou canst.” It may yet be; for if God wills, who can oppose it? If he decree, who can reverse it? “And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.”

It has been conjectured by some that Moses here uses the language of desperation, and invokes upon himself the irremediable sentence of final perdition. But when we consider all that this includes in it, of eternal separation from the Foun-

tain of happiness, of alienation matured into enmity, of abandoned association with the cursed and blaspheming spirits of the infernal world, it is impossible that so revolting a wish entered his soul, or that his heavenly spirit, held in the bonds of unchanging love, was violated by the intrusion of so cruel and abhorred a sentiment. It is probable he refers to the declaration made above, that in rejecting Israel God would make of him a great nation. This interpretation is quite natural, for how could his heart sustain the alternative? Could he, so true, so loyal an Israelite, separate his lot from that of Israel? Could he, bereft and despoiled of the fruit of years of anxious toil, and of faith founded on inviolable promises, accept of this as an indemnification for his loss, or consent to console himself with new projects of happiness, or erect his name and found his greatness on the ruins of forgotten Israel? No; rather let the grave yield him a refuge from such parricidal honours. Life had cost him already too many pangs to leave him energy to commence it anew. It was enough now to be allowed to share the common desolation, and having sustained for a moment the dreaded consummation of his woes, that his life and hopes should be extinguished together. Faithful Moses! Thy interests as well as thy wishes were safe, left for decision at the righteous tribunal of the heart-searching God.

In what remains of this discourse I propose to point out the expediency of surrendering our cause to God in the matter of salvation, as Moses does his, free of all modifications that may seem either to retard or advance our claims; and waving other topics, I shall urge this point from the twofold consideration of the *inability of man* to undertake

the cause himself, and the *interest that God condescends to hold in it.*

I. The helplessness of man, and his utter inability to effect his own salvation, renders it expedient that in this matter we remit our cause simply and wholly to God. There are some things that we have the power of doing ; and these things, whether they be of a moral or of a physical kind, according as they recommend themselves to our reason and conscience, we naturally do or forbear doing. I need not pretend to point out what such things are ; they are innumerable as various—the actions that occur incessantly to us, directed and controlled by the unceasing activity of our sentient, thinking, and determining powers. These actions will be morally characterised by the degree of spiritual illumination and sensibility which each individual possesses : and I have no fear of being contradicted in the assertion that no man does all the good things which he could, or abstains from all the evil things that he might abstain from. Of the things comprehended in the sphere of our capacity our salvation is not. If we undertake for ourselves the accomplishment of this high enterprise, we meddle, beyond our measure, in things too high for us, and shall reap only disappointment and sorrow. It belongs not to the criminal to remit his sentence ; nor even to the judge as judge, seeing it is his office to declare and execute the laws, not to abrogate or alter them. This falls within the province of the supreme legislator alone ; and He in this case is one who cannot deviate from His character of unerring truth and unchanging righteousness.

The term *salvation* imports a rescue or recovery, and applies to man as *himself lost and undone*, rather than as having sustained a loss. In a sense we may say we have lost our souls ; but what are our souls ? Are they not ourselves, even the whole man in all his attributes ? There remain behind no uncaptured powers, no band of reserve to rally its forces and attempt a rescue. Man, once innocent, has become guilty, and lies under a sentence of condemnation. Once free, he has come under bondage ; and if a sense of his calamity may lead him to groan in his chains, to sigh after a change of state, or to exclaim, "What must I do ?" it yet cannot help him to achieve his deliverance. The gift of redemption is a secret not dreamt of till revealed, nor accepted by natural reason when revealed. Human nature has as little to do in the discovery as in the invention ; and man could as soon add a cubit to his stature, or remove himself to another planet, as effect, by his own will or wisdom, his own salvation.

The *reception* that the doctrine of salvation meets with, proves it to be uncongenial with our choice as it is remote from our expectation. The character of God and the terms of our relation to Him are all different from what we would have them to be. What things so strange and unacceptable to the unrenewed mind as some of the truths that are unfolded in the Word of God ? How hard to think of God as a sin-avenging God, strict to mark iniquity, and by no means clearing the guilty ? How discouraging to be required to serve one whom we have not ability to please, and to dwell ever under His eye ? How repulsive to think of close contact, of undisguised discovery, of sifting inspection, of an

unsparring sentence? How unreasonable, too, does it seem that we should be charged as if with the guilt of the first transgression in being subjected to its consequences; that *that* should continue to be our duty which, while remaining what we naturally are, can never be our choice; that the law should hold fast by its high, unrelaxing demands, making no concession to nature's infirmity, which, being inherent in us, molests us with divers lusts and passions that rebel against the better suggestions of our own minds as well as against the rule of duty? Then, to find withal, should we have done our best, that it must go for nothing; that our most laborious exertions and self-denying restraints bring us not nearer the mark; and that except the heart be changed and its inmost affections be given to God, so that He reign as our chosen Lord and Sovereign, we are but labouring in the fire and wearying ourselves for very vanity! And what disparity does our partial judgment find betwixt sin and its punishment? Even that very weakness and meanness which theology ascribes to our character seem as if they might protect us from the notice, and save us from the indignation of an almighty adversary. How impossible, being parties, to embrace against ourselves these fearful decisions of the Eternal Judge, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the wages of sin is death; depart, accursed."

And again, does not the *remedy* seem as strange and inconceivable as the occasion that calls for it? That God should die for man; that He who can do what He pleases, and is in possession of boundless resources, should take our nature upon Him, and suffer for the sins of a creature so feeble and insignificant! The ear of man cannot try such

words. We find it as hard to believe what God declares as to do what He enjoins. The Saviour He presents is in his vicarious character all strange and incomprehensible to us, confirming the truth that Christ affirms, that "No man knoweth the Son save he that is taught of God," and that "No man can come to him except the Father draw him."

Assuredly, my brethren, if left to ourselves we should be satisfied to ask no higher heaven than this world affords; content to forego all thoughts of spiritual attainment, provided God would consent to forget us as we forget Him, and leave us to be governed by laws of our own choosing. But upon what principle can we dream of such a dispensation from righteous obligation? Can God forget His own glory because we have dishonoured and despised it? Can He abandon the interests of His universal dominion that sinners may not be straitened by opposition, or relinquish unalienable rights that rebels may live at ease and insult Him without fear or remorse? Can His creatures, that have no powers to use either in obedience or in rebellion but what He confers upon them, expect that He should deny Himself to guarantee to them, on their own terms, a sensual and atheistic happiness? The thing we aim at is impossible as the wish is impious. If God should cease to reign here, in how short a time would this earth become a hell of lawless violence, consuming its inhabitants, till death should have nothing left to feed on? The interior of each soul so abandoned would soon present a chaos of such misery as only annihilation could relieve.

And though the sin of nature comes to us without will or consciousness on our part, and offends us by the reproach

it inflicts, yet what benefit could we derive by exemption from the imputation? Sinners as we are now from choice and practice, we should attain but the sad distinction of originality in guilt, the boast of being the first agents in our own ruin and apostasy. But situated as we are, is it not our only wise part to acknowledge the evils of which we cannot but be conscious, and to give to the inbred malady of nature a perpetual place in the sorrows of our repentance? Who would so league himself with corruption as to wish its establishment and perpetuity in his own person? Who would so dishonour God as to ask Him to be its patron and defender? Happy they in whom grace triumphs over nature, and who prove their affinity to the heavenly family by delighting in a holy God, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness!

In confirmation of these representations I appeal to those who have had some experience of the renewing efficacy of Divine grace. You, my friends, may, some of you, remember the time when the doctrines of the gospel, as you understood them, seemed ill adapted to their purpose. You saw not what support virtue received from the disparagement of your most elaborate attainments, nor what inducement to the undertaking of a great work was to be drawn from the conviction that it was beyond your power to accomplish it. It seemed hard to be deprived, in the work of salvation, of the most influential of those motives that stimulate your efforts in other pursuits; to be denied the praise that might attach to success, and to have nothing assigned you but the exercise of humble confession and self-renouncing gratitude. The more you strove to be reconciled to the doctrines of grace,

the more you felt repelled and appalled by them. Few things more awakened your wonder than the pretensions of those who professed to hold these doctrines inseparably connected with all their enjoyment of peace or hope of perfect blessedness. In your minds they awakened an endless contest, in which reason was still baffled and conscience not appeased. And you know how soon you would have rid yourselves of the conflict, and found a refuge in other projects of happiness, if God had not stepped in to your rescue, quelling the insurrection of doubt and error, and presenting truth in its harmonious symmetry and Divine majesty to your view. The Author and Finisher of your faith, *His* was the time, *His* the means, the progress, and the final result. Your previous resistance, your secret repining, your angry disputings against the truth, have given place to wondering thankfulness and humble adoration. They have issued in fruits you did not cultivate, or expect to derive from them, and have enhanced to you the joy attending the exercise of the newly acquired faculties of the spiritual life.

You cannot ascribe any necessary virtue to the agency employed in effecting this change, nor say why it was distinguished beyond other similar agency. It was not the first faithful sermon you heard that fixed its impress on your heart, and refused to be ejected by all the gainsaying of prejudice and perversity. Many, perhaps, not less adapted to your case, had spent their idle shafts on you before one found an obedient ear or an accessible mind. And on former occasions, perhaps, while you were passed by, others had been called, less reluctant than you, though not more in need of a Saviour. Nor was it the first affecting dispensation of Providence that

made way for God in your soul. It was not perhaps unbroken health, undiminished affluence, uninterrupted family prosperity, that buoyed up your confidence in your own means of happiness, and banished the intrusive thought of death and hereafter. Your hearts, it may be, have felt their sorrows, have known the pangs of separation from beloved friends, or seen the downfall of your cherished prospects. It may be that you yourselves have approached the confines of the grave, and unawakened by the momentous crisis, or lulled by a self-righteous confidence and delusive hope, have prepared, with what you had, to meet the fate you could not repel. But God spared you and raised you up, hedging in your path, and leading you, by ways you knew not, to the knowledge of His saving grace.

And as we are dependent on God for the first movement in the work of our salvation, so nothing is more dangerous than the assumption of independence in any stage of our progress. Nature still continues in us an impeding, opposing power, which, though it yields to the ascendancy of a master principle, needs only be left to itself to prove its identity with all that grace has to contend against. The work of sin in the heart of man still runs parallel with the work of grace. We cannot specify the hour in our experience that has been blemished by no unhallowed thought, that needs not the sprinkling water of a Divine expiation. If grace has increased in our use of it, binding us closer to God, and strengthening all that was *His* in us, yet sin has also held on its sinister attempts, diminishing the amount of our spiritual attainments, and never relinquishing its plea of affinity. If our sentence were to be determined by that which preponderates

in the brighter period of our lives, should we not fear to strike the balance, lest our marred and mutilated virtues should but swell the catalogue of our crimes—lest our very victories should bear with them the reproach of defeat? How suitable at all times the confession of the Psalmist, “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” and how precious his argument, “But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared!” We may even be ashamed to ask the grace we have so often neglected, the strength we have so poorly applied—to renew the confession of sins so often repeated, so often forgiven—to remind our Father of former intercourse of love, unchanging on His part, but lost to us from coldness and unfaithfulness on ours. Let us sink silent and abashed before Him; and, referring our case unreservedly to Himself—to His sovereignty, His wisdom, His love—let us bind up our arguments in this one indisputable prayer, saying, in Christ’s name, “*Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive our sins.*” Clinging to this argument, I will say, “Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, upon the Lord.”

Leaving these things to your consideration, I would suggest the analogy that seems to present itself betwixt our moral condition by nature and that of the unfortunate sufferers* for whom it is my duty at this time to bespeak an interest in your benevolent sympathies. For are we not, like them, Nature’s *Incurables*—sick of an irrecoverable disease, which destines us to the grave, and which must accompany us thither? In a state of spiritual insolvency, no days of

* Preached in St Andrew’s Church, Edinburgh, in behalf of the *Society for Incurables*.

pristine health, no years of independent vigour belong to us here; but stricken in a mortal part, we bear the weapon in the wound, that can be drawn thence only in dying, when faith expands her wings for a heavenward flight, and begins to breathe into the soul the healthful air of immortality. Bruised as we all are in our first *fall*, and subject to many forms of calamity and suffering, those may well appeal to us to whom Providence has assigned a marked and peculiar eminence among sufferers. It was to such that our gracious Saviour, when here below, manifested the peculiar tenderness of His compassion. He knew how much they require, and how little they often receive, of the sympathy and care on which they are necessarily dependent; how the heart that is not callous to every grief will yet become hardened against those forms of it that are perpetual; how insignificant often to the healthy and the vigorous will appear the alleviation of troubles that they cannot remove, and how welcome an event, in many cases, is the death of dependents who can add nothing to the honour or prosperity of the living. He shunned not the society of any that sought Him—the abject, the despised, the outcast, the loathsome, in every kind and degree of wretchedness. And while he encourages us to cast our souls upon Him, sunk as they may be in all stages of degradation and hopelessness, He also instructs us how to succour the afflicted, and to open our bowels of compassion to them, not only when we may be won by affecting qualities in sorrow, and touched in the chord of natural sensibility, but rather proportioning our assiduity to the urgency of the need, finding our attraction in that which repels others, and bestowing our care where there

is much to be done, with little delight, and nothing of a worldly kind to reward us.

How affecting, amid the many ills of humanity, the circumstances of those who have no days of happy health, of unstudied ease, to look forward to—to whose eye nature has tarnished the freshness of her beauty—to whose heart spring returns not to restore the genial glow of hope! For them how many prospects have prematurely faded, how many hopeful blossoms have withered ere they were blown! We shall all die. No vigour of unbroken strength can retard or elude that fixed event; nor can any wasting canker of disease expedite or make it more certain. Yet who that bears about with him inseparably the disease that parts not from him but with life, and feels daily the admonitory threat of its encroachments, can taste unchecked the joys that life presents to others, or yield without regret the hope of sharing in these enjoyments? His lot enjoins a task like the mortification, self-imposed, of certain monks, who dig a daily shovelful of earth in preparation for their grave, that death may be ever before them. What solace can be found for a state of changeless bereavement but that derived from the possession of heavenly treasure? Happy those who have found an unseen Saviour more precious to them in His gracious communications than in all His providential gifts—who have extracted sweetness from sorrow, and lost this world only as a scene of effort and expectation to gain another free of all its imperfections!

You, whose task of love it is to visit these children of affliction, feel, I trust, how inferior a part of your work is that of bestowing your pittance of alms on sufferers who

have many spiritual wants. To your office belongs the nobler charity that seeks to elevate the debased and the desponding—to quicken, in some cases, with the enlivening beams of a Saviour's love, the grovelling spirits of the repining, the selfish, and the unthankful—to carry hope into the cheerless bosom, becoming eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and causing the tongue of the dumb to break forth in songs of praise. These are the services appropriate to you who work as Christ's followers, who seek your reward from "Him that liveth for ever and ever." "He that winneth souls is wise," and "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever." The number of those assisted by this Society is near a hundred, of various ages, each suffering under the pressure of poverty as well as incurable disease; and the funds from which they have in time past received a scanty relief are now so reduced, that, without a seasonable replenishment from this afternoon's collection, there will be no alternative for the managers short of casting off many of those unfortunates, whose help has been hitherto found in the bounty which Providence stirred up for them through this Society.

VIII.

THE REFUGE.

“ Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin.”—Exodus xxxii. 31, 32.

THE inference which this affecting petition suggested to us was, that, in the matter of salvation, there is nothing so expedient as that man remit his cause to the *sovereign will of God*, with a mind prepared to receive unconditionally whatever terms God may see meet to impose. And the arguments by which I proposed to enforce this recommendation were to be derived, first, from man's inability to do any thing to secure his own salvation, and, secondly, from the interest which God himself is pleased to take in this great concern. The first of these subjects has already engaged us, yet before proceeding to the second I must be allowed to resume and extend a little the views and arguments formerly presented to you.

Wherever man is found, and in whatever circumstances or state of society, we fail not to discover in him abundant indications of ignorance, perplexity, and fear, with respect to a future state, with no solution of the difficulties that surround him, no antidote against the evils that afflict him, no compensation for that spoiler, death, that denudes him at once of all his possessions. Man has toiled on, almost since his first

creation, struggling with doubts, and suspicions, and fears, without overcoming them. No discovery of science has thrown illumination on the anxious problem of an unknown hereafter ; no sagacity of wisdom, or fortunate results of adventurous genius, have lighted on the invaluable secret, or bequeathed to posterity the precious inheritance of a secure and satisfying portion for the soul. Man still pursues happiness, and can bear all things but the certainty of its never being to be attained. Unsubdued by many disappointments, he acquiesces not in the decision that determines the future to be as the past, and deprives him of hope as much as of possession. He can bear up under pain, mortification, and disaster ; not under the extinction of hope, the absolute negation of possible happiness. Mercy guards him, as by a law of his probationary state, from despair ; oh, why are its purposes so often frustrated by his refusing to appropriate all the blessings it offers him ? Why does he still seek in his own devices that which, if not sought in God, is nowhere else to be found ? His efforts serve only to demonstrate his weakness. Whether he aim at propitiating an offended Deity, or at repelling from his recollection the thought of a condemning Judge ; whether he labour to secure some hope for the future, or venturing *that* on the issue of chance, resolve on rescuing what he can from the present hour ; whether, in a state of heathen darkness, he seek to reconcile natural conscience with the practice of sin, or, amid the light of the gospel, grasp at the declaration of mercy only to liberate himself from the control of the law—still all his movements are expressive of doubt and perturbation. Impeded in the prosecution of nature's propensities by the remonstrances of con-

science, life is worn out in the alternations of unsatisfying sin and unprofitable repentance. His heart obtains not the peace it sighs after ; his soul has found no home ; a secret fear hangs over him ; and busy with expedients that are sure to fail, he bears about a spirit unappeased, Christless, comfortless, till refreshed by the water of which he that drinketh thirsts no more. For who to whom *reflection* brought delight, would make exertions, as many do, to escape from it ? Who that might solace himself in the Divine favour, and in blissful visions of futurity, would seek his joy, as is but too common, in the degradation of his nature, and in the extinction, if it were possible, of his spiritual being ? Who that might call the *Father of lights* his friend, would seek to rear his happiness on the independent basis of his own theories, in neglect and exclusion of the wisdom that is unerring ?

In his state of natural alienation, man dares not apply to God for the solution of his doubts, for light, or for direction. The law he has broken comprehended no provision for return after a lapse, or for the substitution of any service instead of a perfect obedience. His intercourse with God is suspended, and he is afraid to seek a renewal of it. He fears to investigate his circumstances, lest they prove desperate. He fears to take counsel of God, lest conscience should urge upon him demands which he has not courage to comply with. Shut up in unfriendly reserve, the good news of salvation is that to which nature has no power to help him. Undone in himself, and without hope in God, no consideration would induce the thought of throwing himself naked into the arms of sovereign mercy, saying, "*Yet now, if thou wilt forgive my sin !*"

Nor is it only in a natural state that the helplessness of man appears. The religious life of a Christian, after conversion, bears equal testimony to the truth that salvation is of God, and that man may pretend to no share in it. The Spirit of grace must still hold us up in every stage of the work of sanctification, otherwise we instantly sink and fall. Nature continues her struggle, watchful, as a defeated rival, over every occasion of advancing her ascendancy; and on every advantage introduces her old confederates, reserve, suspicion, fear, and conscious guilt. These, I admit, are the productions of nature, not the fruits of the Spirit; and the Christian's charter entitles him to reject their insinuations, and to disclaim their interference with his peace; yet who has not found, in the hour of trial, that human strength is weakness, and human weapons but like a broken reed against the power of the enemy? Who dares deny that even his latest victory saved him in his extremity, and was won by other hands than his own? When sin has been suffered to make encroachments, and spiritual vigour has decayed, no power revivifies the soul, or quells the tumult of upbraiding conscience, short of that which first restored it from the dead, and breathed into it the breath of spiritual life. The second conquest is often more arduous than the first, as sin wears a more aggravated character, bringing against us a charge of ingratitude which the times of ignorance could not supply. The more cause of offence God has against us, the more He must woo us to reconciliation. We are found of Him, as He might well be found of us, like "a brother offended, that is harder to be won than a strong city." The tendency of sin is to harden the heart, and to deceive us as to its character, extent, and

consequences. It alters not its nature in the experience of believers, and needs only be left to its own tendencies to carry them, whatever their attainments may have been, to the depths of irreparable perdition.

Our repentance itself too often bears the marks of our imbecility, not only in its shallowness, but in the capricious selection of its objects; for not unfrequently the heart will be little affected with sins of conspicuous magnitude, though aware of them, and will be unconscious of the existence of others; while some inferior act of delinquency will fasten conviction on us, and fill us with shame and self-reproach. It is not that we overrate the minor offence. The acuteness of our feelings with respect to it may indicate to us the aspect that sin presents to that pure vision which has never been clouded by it, and how profound would be that sorrow which should bewail it as it deserved. It may shew us also how worthless is our repentance if proposed as a reparation for our guilt, being so imperfect in itself and so partial in its exercise. Not that we would disparage the offering of a "broken and contrite heart," which is indeed precious in the sight of God; but in the matter of justification, we must disown our righteousness as we would our sins, and must take refuge only in the grace of that Saviour in whom alone "all the house of Israel shall be justified and shall glory."

But while the helplessness of man, and his inability to secure his own salvation, shews us the necessity of remitting our cause to God, saying, "*If thou wilt, forgive my sin,*" I remark, in the second place, *the encouragement* given us thus *to make our appeal* by the consideration of *the interest which God is pleased to take in it*. That which is beyond the

power, and in no degree level to the endeavour of man, if done for him at all, must be done by another—even by that God who is the party offended ; who only has right to dispense with laws appointed by Himself, or to substitute any alternative or compensation for the obedience man owed Him ; and who only, likewise, has access to our spirits, and power to impart to them what character and what impressions He wills. If any man feel that he has become a new creature, that the enmity of nature has been subdued, that the unclean spirits that have lodged in him have been expelled, that the Saviour has become precious in his experience and honourable in his esteem, he knows that it is “the zeal of the Lord of hosts that has wrought this.” He himself as little designed as executed it. A wonder to himself as to others, it is by the evidence of an internal experience that he has learned how he has been valued, and how cared for, by Him who was not in all his thoughts. And now reconciled to God, the love shed abroad in his heart discovers to him that spring of eternal love, of which what he feels is but the responsive impulse. It was not that he loved God, but that God loved him ; and chose him to be an example of *love-inspiring grace*. And all those holy desires, found in any of us that aspire after happiness in the favour of God and in resemblance to Him, those sorrows that lament sin as offending *Him*, those hopes that find their rest in Him, that charity that glows with affection toward all who bear His image, bespeak the same origin. For these graces are not the produce of nature. If God had not cared for us, such traces of His hand should not have been found in us. Every regenerate soul, every conflicting soldier of the host below, every rejoicing saint in the company above,

is a trophy of that love, a monument of that power, in which, as all need, all may find a refuge.

If God has redeemed *one soul*, He has exercised a power equal to the salvation of the race to which that soul belongs. If in any case He freely and of His own good will wrought this act of salvation, to what other quarter should any of us apply for the blessing? There was not in that case more to attract or less to oppose Him; and if there were, the difference vanishes before the might which is infinite. If *one* such being has possessed His love—love not fathomed by our wants, nor diminished by boundless participation—why may not *we*, to whom it is as easily given, and who are as much undone without it? If God had made us no more explicit offer, nor given any more inviting encouragement than might be drawn from such solitary example, yet, situated as we are, suspended as by a hair over the gulf of destruction, insulated as on the last rock amid the surrounding deluge, who would not stretch a hand toward this golden chain that still united earth with heaven? who would not ascertain, by an effort comprising all his strength, whether that mighty arm, whether that boundless pity, might not yet embrace another victim, and add one trophy more to the bright memorial of undeserved and unexpected mercy? Why should we, because not reduced to so forlorn a hope, because countless are the numbers whom His love is pledged to embrace, deem our interest in this salvation unworthy of our care, and lose the incomparable, the irrecoverable prize, from presumptuously assuming either that it cannot avail for us or that it is ours without an effort?

Our present condition in this world is full of mysteries,

which the fall of man, though accounting for them as their cause, does not help us to comprehend. Moral evil has flowed on from that fruitful source through all the range of circumstances that man can occupy as a rational and social being. Natural evil adds its disturbing influence, and that intellectual darkness which sin spreads abroad involves the human race in labyrinths of error, and oftentimes in mysteries of iniquity, which it is easier to acknowledge than to explain.

For though all things existing in the world are arranged by infinite wisdom, in subordination to those great principles of righteousness and goodness which ever regulate the Divine government, it were the height of presumption in a creature like man to refuse his assent to clearly established truths and facts, known by revelation or ascertained by experience, because he cannot comprehend or explain them. This were as if a child newly born should refuse to live by air till furnished with an analysis of its component parts; or as if a mole, whose narrow vision confines it to a subterraneous existence, should demand a delineation of the surface of the globe, or an explanation of the movements of the heavenly bodies. Neither demand could be gratified, not because the subjects admit not of explanation, but because the inquirers are incapable of comprehending it.

Now, there is no subject with respect to which the mind of man has suffered so great an obscuration as the character of God. That subject, which demanded the highest elevation of his powers, gave largest scope for failure, and amplest room for the degeneracy of nature to display itself in error. If there be some truths that may be found out by honest research, and that command the acquiescence of every think-

ing mind, yet the force of these has been continually eluded in respect of their practical tendencies. They have been held as sublime abstractions, not as governing principles. Among civilised men few will deny that God is wise, beneficent, and blessed, free from moral and natural imperfection; and that He approves of such conduct and dispositions in His intelligent creatures as correspond with His own attributes. Men have not disputed much about what is right and virtuous when their judgment has been appealed to in an abstract form, not involving their personal interests. All men unite in applauding exemplary specimens of justice, integrity, disinterestedness, and courage, and in condemning the contrary. The miser may admire the man of generosity; the coward may esteem the brave. The bad do not differ from the good in their abstract opinion of good and evil. But it is one thing to admire pure and elevated conduct, and another to adopt it. How small a seduction, in many a case, addressing itself to the baser part of our nature, subverts our loftier aims, and obscures to us the glory of those rewards of fame and human praise to which the disciples of this world's philosophy often ascribe the title of immortality! Aware of human weakness, we are suspicious of men in proportion to the temptations with which we know them to be surrounded. We censure, with more or less severity, according to the amount, whether less or greater, of the difficulties that obstruct the onward path of uprightness and truth, and men hardly believe in the existence of that integrity which, resting only on common principles, should escape immaculate from a small sin when set in opposition to a great supposed advantage.

There are some principles that are of unchanging truth

and authority in the Divine administration; and of this kind is the law that unites peace with innocence, security with righteousness, and happiness with the favour of God. These truths have had advocates in all ages. Moralists have often argued that a mind enslaved by vice is incapable of happiness,—that that only is really for our interest that includes our permanent well-being,—and that it is a false calculation that expects to derive good from pleasure won by the sacrifice of purity. But while men have approved the things that were more excellent, and have concluded that mankind would be infinitely gainers by the universal adoption of such principles, these principles have had little weight even with those who held them. Who has there been, apart from Christian influence we mean, magnanimous enough to set the example? Have not all men devolved on others the arduous duty, feeling as if they should be defrauding themselves of their share in the pleasures of sin by relinquishing it for advantages they had not ascertained to be more than contingent, and that the lesson so dearly bestowed would be lost on those for whom it was intended? The reason of all this imbecility and inconsistency is, that the knowledge of God has been lost, and that the loss has proved irreparable. Man, without the intervention of revelation, has no foundation left on which to rear the structure of his virtues. He knows imperfectly, even in his own apprehension, what the Supreme Ruler approves and what He condemns, and feels no undoubting assurance that He will accept or reward his efforts. For though men readily discern the advantage of those virtues by which their temporal welfare is promoted, and the inconvenience of the opposite

vices, yet they have not the energy and self-denial to walk by their own rule ; and their moral code, for the most part, ends here. They have no discernment of their relation to God or of His interest in them. They impute to Him the character that belongs to themselves, confining His jurisdiction to the ceremonies of religion, in which it is not uncommon to suppose Him to be childishly interested—and withdrawing it from the personal character and social actions of men, as too insignificant to attract His notice or affect His greatness. They would consider His authority over them as instituted, prior to all other considerations, for their personal ease and enjoyment, consistently with the dispositions that now belong to them ; and, according to their views, God is reduced to the monstrous dilemma of either conferring upon them immortal felicity with the preservation of all in their nature which is abhorrent to His own, or of imposing on them, by an arbitrary and violent coercion of their moral powers, without effort or consent on their part, such a change as would make them at once conformable to His choice and capable of heavenly happiness. I need not stay to prove that the first of these measures involves a moral impossibility, and that the second is inconsistent with the character of both God and man.

If, passing from the obscurity of his own moral views and principles, man goes forth to seek after God in the world around him, he finds in that world, as itself participating in our ruin, and commissioned with its share in the infliction of our sentence, many obstructions to a clear discernment of the true character of its Author. God is everywhere become a stranger to us. We “go forward, but he is not there ; and

backward, but we cannot perceive him." "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." Our world is governed like a remote and inferior province, which retains but few marks of its prince's favour, and which he cannot visit with satisfaction. We speak of the *laws of nature* as governing the world; and those who did not know that the original blessing bestowed upon the earth had been withdrawn in righteous judgment, might suppose that the Great King had deputed inferior agents to rule it, who, obedient to their general instructions, were far from being inspired with those perfect parental sympathies that provide against every exigence of their cherished charge. Thus nature is *wasteful* in her fertility, but some of her children perish for lack of bread; *capricious* also, for the base are often pampered and extolled, while the best are despised and exposed to the want of all things. The air we breathe is rendered salubrious by the agitation of the elements; but when they swell to fury, and the driving tempest wraps the earth in mantling snow, it pities not the houseless traveller that sinks beneath its whelming force. The wave wafts the vessel onward to the port, but cares not for the lives entrusted to it, nor hears the cry of anguish when the tempest roars, and the cataracts spout; and hidden rocks project their pointed spears, to smite with the shock of death their unrescued victims. The showers of heaven are welcome to the genial earth; but what is man against the world of waters when they burst their barriers, and bear on their destructive tide the stateliest trees, the loftiest edifices, the bodies of lifeless men and murdered animals, the stores of nature and the accumulations of art, in un-

distinguished ruin to the main? Nay, the world itself is but the ruin of that which was the work of God, and bears, even in its most favoured regions, indubitable marks of the judgments of the Most High. For though it be willingly admitted that, in the natural world, the good predominates over the evil, and the evil often elicits the good, yet was it not worthy of an infinite Creator to have made the means as faultless as the end, the instruments as worthy as the work to be performed by them? It is not *power* that fails Him; to make the steps of His progress as perfect as the object to be attained, is doubtless wise and glorious. But sin has hid, as it were, His face from us; His glories are averted. We are as scholars under discipline, as criminals undergoing our sentence. He confides not to us the plan of His operations; "His footsteps are in the deep waters;" and, unaided by His Spirit, we vainly strive by searching to find Him out.

Thus manifold and insuperable by human wisdom are those circumstances of separation subsisting betwixt God and man, that lead to perpetual misapprehension of His character, and that hinder us from appreciating and embracing the mercy revealed in the gospel, as well as from obeying the original law and chief end of our being. God deals with us now as with children who have lost his confidence, or rather who have withdrawn their confidence and affection from Him. His Word, indeed, is a revelation of most condescending mercy; its expressions are most tenderly accommodated to our weakness and wants; its Divine Author deigns to reason with us, and to engage the powers He has bestowed in the consideration of the most touching and influential arguments; yet *as God* He cannot compromise His own honour. It is by

submission, not by independence, that we must gain His approbation. It is by changing and renovating, not by conforming to us, that He raises us to a participation of his blessedness. His statements are, therefore, often brief and authoritative, requiring prompt acquiescence, and bearing illumination and comfort only to obedient children, to the pure in heart and the lowly in mind.

The Scriptures are given for the instruction of the fallen, not of the upright. Our concern is not with man as he was before he lost his Father's image ; nor is more told us of what preceded that sad change than is needful to introduce the counsels and directions necessary in our present condition. We know not why sin was suffered so soon to change the blissful scene that had just been opened to the new creation, nor what share was felt in heaven of that regret which the failure of such bright prospects must have awakened in every rightly constituted mind. For though His perfect knowledge of the future, and His absolute power over all that it comprehends, exclude all surprise and disappointment from the Eternal Mind, there is a depth of emotion that should greatly affect us in the expressions God makes use of respecting the feelings with which He contemplated the change that had passed upon man. Let us not suppose, because His infinite wisdom did not prevent that calamity, that He experienced no bereavement ; or, because His glory and His bliss suffered no essential derangement, that no sentiment of holy love was violated when the object on which it had rested with complacency was withdrawn. God had created man in His likeness, to adore, and serve, and be blessed in Him ; and when he saw him abandoned to universal, unvarying apostasy, how

striking are the terms used by the inspired historian respecting Him—"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it *repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved* him at his heart."* What shall we say of such feelings attributed to the Eternal? What depth of commiseration do they express! What lamentation over His lost and ruined creature! "My spirit," said He, "shall not always strive with man, for that he is flesh;" as if He at last relinquished an effort long persevered in, but hopeless. And how striking the thought suggested by His words, at the close of that fearful judgment which destroyed the world but saved the Church! After Noah had built an altar and offered burnt-offering, it is said, "The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done."† This fearful judgment, inflicted for once, was a demonstration to all after ages of the ruinous consequences of sin, and of God's abhorrence of it; but the repetition of such a judgment could never effect the cure of that moral malady, which had made man its prey, and which still pursues him from generation to generation. It was not by judgment, but by mercy, his recovery was to be wrought; not by the terrors of the flood, but by the mysteries of the cross—even by the gift of God's dear Son; by His all-precious sacrifice in expiation of the guilt of sin, and by His Almighty power in the work of the new creation, whereby the Divine

* Gen. vi. 5, 6.

† Gen. viii. 21.

image is restored in the soul of man, and the Divine life anew communicated. "God is love; and in this was manifested the love of God, that he gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

My brethren, ye that are far off, return now to the Lord. Allow him to satisfy the longing desires, the breathings of that love that waits repressed, ready to flow out upon you. He has been too long the suppliant. He has too long addressed you, saying, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; yet now return unto me." Let him now, in His turn, hear your voice, saying, "Oh, I have sinned: yet now, if thou wilt, forgive my sin." Return like the prodigal in the parable; and you shall, like him, be met with mercy. It is not when the rebellious and ungrateful child turns his back on the paternal mansion, that the afflicted father pursues him with his love, and pours his grief into the invulnerable bosom; but let him return, and he will learn, by the raptures that greet his approach, how he has been loved, and longed for, and lamented—what joys have been exiled by his loss, what tears have bewailed him. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I abandon thee, Israel? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute mine anger: I will not destroy: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee."

IX.

WINTER.

"It was winter."—JOHN x. 22.

THE succession of the seasons in the natural world is a proof of God's faithfulness—a fulfilment of the declaration He made to Noah after the flood, that, "while the earth remained, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter should not cease,"—a promise which has never been broken for more than four thousand years. And in this arrangement we see not Divine faithfulness only, but Divine wisdom and goodness. These attributes of the great Ruler force themselves on every eye in the cheering aspect and varied productions of spring. Who can look on the renewed fertility of the earth, the fresh verdure of the fields, the opening foliage of the trees, the blossoms of the shrubbery, the flowers of the garden and of the wilderness? who can listen to the singing of the birds, and observe the sportive joy of the whole of animated nature, without an adoring acknowledgment of that beneficence from which all these gifts and all these enjoyments proceed? And again, who can fail to recognise the diffusive wisdom and kindness to which we are indebted for the genial suns and fostering warmth of summer? Who can behold the varied precious

fruits of autumn, provided for the sustenance of man and of the inferior creatures, without praising the Lord for His goodness? And are we not aware that winter too, notwithstanding its dreary appendages, holds an important and essential place in the wise and kind arrangements of Providence—that it is the parent of all the productions of the other seasons, bearing in its bosom and nourishing in its covert recesses those seeds that, at their appointed time, will again cover the earth with their florescence, and yield support to every living thing? Its annoying attributes are, at the same time, salutary and beneficial. Its frost, while it invigorates the human frame, serves the important purpose of pulverising, strengthening, and renewing the soil; its rains moisten and fatten the ground; its elemental wars contribute to the salubrity of the air and the health of the animal creation; its “fire, hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling God’s word,” all, we have reason to believe, bring beneficial influences along with them: and if for a while they buffet and molest, calling into exercise human forethought and skill, they prepare us the better to welcome and enjoy on their return the other more genial seasons.

But the arrangements of creation are not meant to indicate goodness alone, but other attributes also, no less demanding our regard. In winter we are called to mark the majesty and fearful power of God, and to feel how weak man is, how puny his efforts, how empty his pretensions. What man, what army however numerous, what navy however strong, can resist the storm when God’s word commands it forth—can contend with the wind when He brings it out of His treasury—or “can stand before his cold?” Let these

agents be but a little aggravated and intensified, how would they lay waste the habitations of men, exhaust their strength and their resources, and extinguish human life! Is it not Jehovah that rides upon the storm, saying with a voice full of majesty, "Be still, and know that I am God?" See the picture given of human imbecility in Psalm cvii. 23-27, "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end." And while the ocean rages at His bidding, the earth confesses His power; at one time devastated by the hurricane, at another locked up by the icy hand of frost, or lost under mantling depths of snow, while man, often the victim of the elements, can do nothing to bind up or turn away their fury, or loosen the bands that hold the earth imprisoned.

As all our sufferings are the fruit of sin, we must attribute to that source the pains and sufferings occasioned by the severity of the seasons. And in this view, how interesting is it to behold the Son of God, while He tabernacled among us, submitting to these as to the other trials and sorrows of humanity! "It was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter: and Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch." Undeterred by cold, rain, snow, the common troubles and hardships of our temporal condition, He prosecuted the work given Him to do. Urged on by holy zeal, He said, "I must work the works of Him that sent

me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." But I mean not to enlarge on His character in this view, nor yet to consider the phenomena of this season of the year as illustrating the providence and power of God. I would rather remark that there is scarcely any habit of mind more useful than that which leads us to trace the *analogies* existing between things natural and things spiritual, and to employ God's works in the external world as emblems of what takes place in the spiritual life. In this view I consider winter as a natural emblem of the frequent state of the soul, and would suggest a few features of resemblance in relation to different characters that may, through the blessing of God, furnish materials for profitable reflection.

I. Winter is a fit emblem of the state of the *unconverted*. For example, in the depth of winter the light of heaven is, to a great extent, withdrawn and obscured. Even in this country, though within the temperate zone, our day is brief; and often the sun breaks not once through the clouds, leaving the face of nature and all visible things in dull, hazy, cheerless obscurity. But still more dreary is winter's reign in the regions of the far north, where, for successive months, the orb of day never appears above the horizon, shedding at best a twilight on the earth, or leaving his place to be supplied by the lesser lights of heaven; while the natives shelter themselves within earthen or snow-constructed caves, feeding on the flesh of the reindeer or of the seal, clothed with its skin and lighted by its oil—passing what they can of their time in the oblivion of sleep. And is not this an apposite emblem of the state of the unconverted? They see

not the Sun of Righteousness, nor the light He sheds on all those objects that are most important and interesting. The Divine glory is hid from them, even the righteousness, mercy, faithfulness, and love of God, and so also the beauty of holiness, the joy of salvation, and the hope of eternal life. They "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death;" or at best, they "walk in the sight of their eyes and in the imagination of their heart"—in the twilight of human reason—in the moonlight and starlight of unsanctified learning; for they take not the Word of God as a light to their feet. Sunk in spiritual sloth, or deluded by the world's flattering dreams, they "walk in a vain show"—"they are as a sleep," and "as a dream when one awaketh, their vain imaginations perish." The darkness of winter is a fit emblem of the moral darkness that rests upon such souls.

And with this is connected another feature of winter, namely, its *deadness* and torpor, its *barrenness* and unfruitfulness. There is no foliage on the trees, no corn on the ground, no fruit in the garden, except what may be forced by artificial heat, and is usually found to be wanting in the natural and healthful flavour of the productions of summer. So at least it is in the spiritual husbandry. The unregenerate man being planted, not in the garden of the Church under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, but in the wilderness of the world where these are unknown, bears no fruit of right or approved quality. Not having felt the breathing of that Holy Spirit which reneweth the heart of man, he cannot bring forth the fruit of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, righteousness, goodness, truth." Actions right in themselves he may do, but ever vitiated by the meanness and unworthiness

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of the prompting motive ; for still it will be found that to them the saying is applicable, "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit to himself."

Again, the cold of winter is a type of the *heart* of the unregenerate, who are strangers to the genial glow of *pure and spiritual affection*. The warmth of heavenly influence not having reached them, they are like the snow untouched by the sun. The love of the Redeemer awakens no responsive love ; all His invitations, and promises, and encouragements are heard with indifference and distaste. Their tenderest feelings in religion are but a partial thaw produced by a transient sunshine, which, when withdrawn, leaves no memorial behind, save in the pendant icicle and slippery surface of the earth, hardening the more for that momentary softening. Once more, the winds and storms of winter are apposite emblems of those ill-regulated and malignant *passions* which agitate with ceaseless tempest the souls that have no rest in God. "They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind." Tossed to and fro of many vanities, shaken with the winds of false doctrine or besetting temptation, they know nothing of that settled peace, that fixed purpose of heart, that Heaven-built confidence, which sustains the faithful servants of the Lord. Thus while unconverted, it is winter with our souls. In vain we look for any continuous course of holy living, for any generous warmth of heavenly affection, for any substantial and lasting joy. And though the unconverted boast the exclusive possession of the world's pleasures, they are strangers to true enjoyment, living, though they may not know it, in the chill, petrifying, perturbed atmosphere of a perpetual winter.

II. Winter is also a fit emblem of the condition of believers fallen unhappily into a state of *declension and backsliding*. When summer is ended and the autumnal moons are past, a change is soon perceptible, and rapid is the declining progress. Where is the golden light and the luxurious warmth of the weeks that are past? Where the precious produce and glorious spoils of autumn? They are gone, and nothing remains but cold barrenness—trees stripped of their foliage and earth of its verdure, with a dreary sameness of prospect, hiding all promise of returning spring. And is not this an emblem of a state not unfrequent in the experience of those who may have started well, but have left off their watchfulness? Sometimes the soul falls into this state gradually and almost imperceptibly, as the days gradually shorten and the sun declines till we are brought to the depth of winter. Sometimes the decline is more rapid, through the influence of powerful temptation, as when winter is hastened on by a premature and unexpected storm. The believer relaxes his diligence, forgets or trifles with prayer, tampers with temptation, enters into dangerous circumstances without bespeaking the protection and guidance of the Lord. The neglect of secret religion leads to that of public ordinances; the omission of duty paves the way to the commission of sin; his soul loses its purity and peace, and yields to the seduction of evil associates and worldly temptations. The Sun of Righteousness retires, and clouds and obscurity take possession of the mental horizon. In this unprotected state the transgressor is hurried hither and thither—is drawn away in the whirl of erroneous and delusive opinions, or ensnared with the pursuit of wealth and

worldly aggrandisement, or tossed by easy transition into the vortex of sensual debasement and excess. If such change be found in any follower of Christ, how sad the contrast he now exhibits to his former character! Was there a time when, touched by a Divine impulse, he passed from darkness to light—when, escaping from the dominion of sin, he yielded himself the servant of righteousness? Can he remain where he is? Will not a pang of remembrance bring back to him “the kindness of his youth, the joy of his espousals?” Can he think of the Saviour’s love abused and frustrated, and of his own once unfeigned loyalty and devotion, without being smitten with remorse and shame? Ungrateful, perfidious! “Turn, turn: why wilt thou die?” Hear the voice that still follows thee, “Return, ye backsliding children; I will heal your backsliding.” To continue in your present state, is to die; yea, it is to be “twice dead:” “For it had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after having known it, to turn aside from the holy commandment.”

III. Winter is a natural emblem of a state of *desertion and temptation*. In this season nature seems divested of all that charmed and delighted. It resembles a stately palace forsaken by its master, and left to the ravages of time and chance. The Creator seems to have withdrawn from His work, and to have abandoned it to disorder and confusion. Such is the state of the deserted soul, when the Sun of Righteousness has withdrawn His rays, and left it anew to its original darkness and stupor. God’s desertions are usually the effect of man’s negligence, sloth, and relaxed vigilance,

presuming on a position gained from past attainments. A deserted soul is, in most cases, a soul that has departed from the Lord, and that is conscious of unfaithfulness. Yet this is not always the case, for there is a sovereignty in the Divine proceedings embracing more than it reveals to our apprehension. Sometimes for the trial of faith and patience, rather than for the punishment of sin, the Lord withdraws the sensible expressions of His love, and leaves a beloved child for a season to the assaults of the tempter. Thus he acted with respect to Job. Observe what he says in chap. xxiii. 8-10, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him." There was much anxiety and exertion to find God, but all in vain; and thus in the season of desertion our labour is toilsome and unproductive, like his who should urge his plough in the time of frost. We speed little, and it is well if we retain faith enough to be assured that the Lord "knoweth our way, and will bring us forth as gold" out of the furnace. Thus the Lord acted with respect to Paul, when a thorn in the flesh was appointed him—for which thing he "besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him." Thus the Father acted with respect to our Lord Himself, in that hour of darkness when His soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" and again when He cried, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In this, as in other points far beyond our capacity of endurance, He "was tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Among God's beloved and most honoured children—as St Paul, Luther, Bunyan, Whitfield—we find this form of trial in its severest degree; as if the future exalted manifestations and abundant usefulness for which

they were designed, required to be grounded in the deepest sense of their own nothingness, with experience of the wiles of their spiritual adversary, and of the unbounded love and faithfulness of their redeeming God. It was not for a weak or even an ordinary faith, such as you or I may have attained, to pass through such depths, or to rise from such weight of affliction as pressed upon them, and others who have said, "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? and will He remember mercy no more?"

IV. Winter is a natural emblem of a state of *affliction*. The analogy is evident between the dreariness, coldness, barrenness of winter and the many painful circumstances of poverty, want, and distress. In the case of the poor, we know that winter is much more than an emblem, being itself the cause of much want and suffering to those who possess not the means of guarding against its rigour, or making provision for its necessities. How many families are at this hour exposed, defenceless, to cold and nakedness and want of all things!—their habitations stripped of furniture, their persons of clothing, if thus they may procure food for the sustenance of nature. Certainly it is now an important office of "true religion before God even the Father, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction." And how many other sufferers are there under the rigid reign of winter! How many perhaps at this moment exposed to danger and death on the stormy ocean or amid the drifted snow! While we think of them, let us thank God for the security and comfort of our condition. But my subject leads me to remind you of the many sorrows that create winter in the

soul—of the changes that snatch from us our pleasant fruits, our rising hopes, the reward of our labours, the desire and delight of our eyes—of the sweeping and bitter visitations that leave the sufferer deserted and desolate, resembling a blasted trunk, leafless and branchless; with no joy, no hope, no genial warmth of Christian sympathy to support him. When the prodigal was in his father's house, the summer shone over his head; but when he was reduced to beggary and want, with none to comfort him, was it not winter? Above all, when the soul is brought under legal *terror and dismay* in reference to its eternal state, it is winter: the storm of Divine wrath threatens, the thunders burst, the lightnings flash. Nature in its most terrific forms presents but a shadow of the fearful agitation of the awakened and guilty conscience.

Now, my brethren, amid all these varieties of a spiritual winter, what is the object to which our wishes, our prayers, our efforts should be directed? Is it not the *return of spring*, on which event all our prospects of enlargement and improvement are necessarily suspended? Is it not natural, is it not imperative to pray for this event, to hasten on its approach, to open our bosoms to the returning sun? Who would be content it should be always winter? Who would not wish to enjoy the light and glow, the verdure and the fruitfulness of the more genial seasons of the year? In respect of the natural world, all unite in this wish: but so supine, so insensible are men in spiritual things, that they willingly conform themselves to the winter of perpetual worldliness; and, instead of soliciting the spring, are disposed to repel its influence. Let it not be so with us. You

who know or suspect yourselves as still unconverted, have you no misgivings as to your state, no apprehension of your danger? Will you still entrench yourselves in voluntary ignorance, and repel the admonitions of the Saviour? Are you content to be always unproductive and unprofitable? For hitherto *what fruit* have you brought forth to God? What have you done to glorify and honour Him? And what fruit have you yourselves had in those things of which you should be ashamed? But if you come to Jesus, He is still ready to receive you, and able to save, and to cause you to abound in the fruits of righteousness. Are you not sensible that something must be wanting in your case? You do not imagine that religion is that cold, uninteresting, formal thing, in the experience of those who are fairly embarked in it, that you find it in yours. No, certainly; if you know it at all, you must know it to be the richest of treasures and the best of joys. "Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." In the natural world, you cannot command the winter to depart or the spring to advance; you cannot draw the sun to the region you inhabit, or add fervour to his beams; you cannot alter the character of the soil or bestow on it fertility and fruitfulness. Neither can you do these things in the spiritual world; you are equally dependent on the Divine power and grace. "The heavens," according to the emphatic language of the prophet,* must "drop down" their blessings from above; "the skies must pour down righteousness;" "the earth must bring forth salvation and righteousness together," through the creative energy of Jehovah. The blessing, I say,

* Isaiah xlv. 8.

must be obtained from the Lord. That blessing, however, is already provided; righteousness and salvation are already treasured up with God for the benefit of mankind; and, as individuals, we are invited, urged, commanded to receive them. Again, therefore, I address you in the words of inspiration, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee;"* or as in another place, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you."†

You—for I fear there are still some who, after starts of religious emotion, have declined from the good ways of the Lord—let me entreat you to consider your condition. Have you suppressed conviction? Have you learned to neglect prayer? After having set your faces Zionward, have you turned back? How base thus to desert the standard of your Lord! How foolish! Will the world give you happiness? or will your present course afford satisfaction at a dying hour? How dangerous your circumstances! You obscure all your evidences of grace, which, indeed, if you continue in this state of backsliding, will appear to have been mere delusion. Yet a compassionate Saviour now invites your return; and if you will hearken, you know, cold and barren as the winter now is, the returning sun will bring renewed life, health, and fruitfulness to your souls.

You, my friends, if there be those who labour under desertion, under temptation, under dejection of spirit—I would speak to you with tenderness. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant,

* Isaiah lx. 1.

† Hosea x. 12.

that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”* “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” You must cleave still to the Saviour, must wait for Him. Behold, He walketh in the temple, though it be winter; resort thither, you will find him, and He will revive and put new life into your souls. “Wait upon the Lord, and be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, upon the Lord.”

You in affliction, look to Christ, the compassionate, sympathising friend. *He* felt the cold and the blast; as in Jacob's case, “by day the drought consumed Him, and the frost by night.” “Having suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” You sit in darkness; yet in the gospel the day-spring hath visited you. Come, then, to the light of His rising, and in His light you shall see light. He will dispel the darkness, and thaw the frost, and will say to the storm and to the wind, “Peace, be still.” And in due season—your sorrows past, your trials over—you will hear the cheering voice of your Beloved, saying, “Arise, come away; for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, and come.” May it be given us, in our approaching communion, to experience such fruits and evidences of a Saviour's love!

* Isaiah l. 10.

X.

SPRING.

“Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?”
—JOB xxxviii. 31.

IN the majestic remonstrance of which these words are a part, the Almighty summons the attention of His servant Job to the proofs of His wisdom and power in the various departments of creation and providence, with the view of convincing him of his inability to comprehend the Divine proceedings, and so to lead him to a humble submission to the appointments of the Most High, however mysterious and inscrutable. After referring to His unexplained and incomprehensible operations in “laying the foundations of the earth” in depths unfathomable, and in spreading forth its surface replenished with vegetation and life,—in assigning the sea its limits, saying, “Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther,”—in causing “the day-spring” to know its place, and dividing the light from the darkness,—in determining also the phenomena of the atmosphere, rain, snow, lightning, thunder,—the Divine Interrogator goes on to speak of the heavenly bodies, and the influences they exert upon our lower sphere. A word or two of explanation may be not unsuitable.

The *Pleiades* are a constellation or group of seven stars,

seen in the astronomical sign *Taurus*, making their appearance in the spring, and thence called *spring signs*, or tokens. The Hebrew term denoting them is expressive of *beauty*, implying whatever is lovely and delightful. *Orion*, again, is a constellation most conspicuous in *winter*, appearing in Idumea, the land of Job's residence, toward the end of November, extending through December and a part of January, and so becoming a correct though poetic designation of the winter season. *Mazzaroth*, mentioned in the next verse, denotes the constellations of the Zodiac and the region of the Equator, lying to the *south* in reference to Idumea; while *Arcturus* is a conspicuous star in the constellation *Bootes* in the *northern* heavens. Whence the expression, "Arcturus and his sons," is descriptive of the *Arctic* regions, contrasting with *Mazzaroth*, or "the chambers of the south." To confine ourselves to our text—the Pleiades are the symbol of spring; Orion, the indication of winter. If to these explanations we add that, in our text, the word translated "*bind*" signifies to *compel* or *constrain*, the meaning of the interrogation will be more clear, "Canst thou compel the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loosen the bands of Orion?"—Canst thou force forward the spring, and abruptly break up the rigidity of winter? Where, you remark, the vernal renovation of nature, in soft showers and kindly warmth, is opposed to its wintry desolation—the mild progressing benignity of spring to the severe and icy inactivity of winter. Canst thou command the one and dismiss the other, saying to the spring, *Come*—to the winter, *Go*?

I. In pursuing this subject, we begin by remarking how

absolute is the rule of the Most High in the *natural world*. How ignorant is man, my friends, and how impotent in reference to the world of nature around him ! What can he do even in those cases in which his wishes and interests are most earnestly engaged ? Can he alter the Divine dispensations, or so much as either hasten or delay them ? When, for example, in consequence of extreme cold, “ the waters are hid,” as if overlaid with marble, “ and the face of the deep is frozen,” is it in the power of man to hasten the return of the genial season, or to break the fetters of winter ? How firm the bands with which Orion in his strength girds the earth—arresting its rivers and petrifying their waters, stiffening its surface into impenetrable hardness, suspending the sap of the vegetable and the movements of the animal creation ! Many of the animal tribes are withdrawn from a conflict they could not sustain by being shut up, in a temporary oblivion of life, in hiding-places prepared for them by the prospective wisdom of Providence ; others are supported by the stores they had gathered in summer ; while those employed in man’s more immediate service look then to the provision he has made for them. Man himself, no less than they, is subject to the rigorous dispensation ; and never is he more sensibly reminded of his dependence on the Almighty Ruler. For “ who can stand before *His cold* ? ” Who is able, for any length of time, to face its fierceness, or endure its severity ? How helpless is the individual who is exposed, unsheltered and unprotected, to the raging elements—overtaken, on the bleak mountain or trackless heath, by the driven snow bewildering and confounding him, or by the pelting storm buffeting and overwhelming him ! In this

contest with the weapons of Heaven, how soon is his strength spent and his power of resistance exhausted ! He sinks beneath the thickening encumbrance which he can neither repel nor penetrate ; and, after many a fruitless struggle and agonising effort, resigns himself at length to the fatal torpor of a sleep from which he is destined never to awake !

“ The deadly winter seizes, shuts up sense,
Lays him along the snows, a stiffened corse,
Stretched out and bleaching in the northern blast.”

And in such warfare what do *numbers* avail ? Of what effect are the arms of millions against an all-pervading antagonist ? How has the conqueror of many nations been beaten without an opposing foe, by that breath of God which forms and fixes the frost ! How have armies, accustomed to victory, been forced to drop their useless weapons, and, falling before an invisible enemy, been strewed in lifeless heaps upon the snows of a Russian winter. How pointed would have seemed the question of our text addressed to Napoleon in his conflict with the unconscious elements, “ *Canst thou compel the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion ?* ” A little mitigation of the cold—a retarding for a while of winter—a south wind to loosen the shackles of Orion—or the anticipation by a few weeks of the sweet influences of the Pleiades, would have saved the perishing myriads. But their most earnest wishes, their utmost efforts are vain ; a change so easily and instantaneously effected when God wills it, man can no more achieve than he can push the earth from its centre, or control its progress in the depths of space.

Let us then mark our absolute dependence, and humble

ourselves before the Almighty Ruler. "If He hide His face we are troubled, if He take away our breath we die!" A little aggravation of the power of cold would suffice to destroy the germ of vegetable existence, to quench the fire of animal life, and to make this earth the cemetery of all its inhabitants. But it is *His* cold, even *Jehovah's*; and He who gives it its commission sets limits to its excesses. Let us only give Him our reverence and our confidence, and we shall have no reason to regret our weakness, but abundant cause to rejoice that all power is lodged in the hand of Him whose goodness is infinite, and whose "tender mercies are over all His works." In due season He fails not to bring forward those benign influences that from afar loosen the fetters of the imprisoned earth. "He sendeth out His word, and melteth" the ice-bound element; "He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow." His creative Spirit breathes afresh, and He renews the face of the earth. Then is that beautiful description realised—"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell."* The lovely processes of the spring, followed by the more powerful heat of summer, terminate at length in the fruits of autumn. According to the devout acknowledgment of another inspired writer, "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness." "The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing."† In

* Song ii. 11-13.

† Psalm lxx. 11-13.

the whole progress of nature, advancing step by step from the sterility of winter to the abundance of autumn, we may well adore the operation of the All-wise and All-bountiful; saying, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches." *

We have considered the words of the text in their proper and primary application to the processes of nature, declaring in reference to these the sovereignty of God and the powerlessness of man. But you will readily perceive that they are susceptible of an instructive accommodation to other departments of the Divine government, where man is equally reminded of his ignorance and weakness. Such accommodation does not, I trust, violate the dictates of a spiritual taste, having the sanction, in many instances, of the sacred writers, and of our Lord Himself, who not only taught the people in parables, but intimated that His miracles performed on the body were emblematical of the effects of His power upon the soul.

II. I go on, then, to remark, in the second place, that He who rules in the kingdom of nature rules also in that of *providence*. *The events of life* are no less under His control than are the stars in their courses. Canst thou compel or retain the sweet influences of prosperity? or canst thou loose the bands of adversity? "Who can make that straight which God hath made crooked?" As little can we alter the shape of our bodies or make our hairs white or black, as control the purposes of Infinite Wisdom in respect of our lot in life. If wealth be ours, it is His gift; if poverty, it is His

* Psalm civ. 24.

appointment: for He it is who gives and who takes away. If we enjoy health or pine away in sickness, it is the Lord who both wounds and heals, who kills and makes alive. All our comfort and satisfaction, whether of a bodily or a mental kind, is received from Him; and when He pleases, is in a moment wrested from us. Joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, come and go at His command. "If He giveth quietness, who, then, can create trouble?" and if He hide His face, who can dissipate the darkness and gain access to "behold Him?" It is true that men themselves, being free and intelligent creatures, do by their character and conduct *modify* and *influence* their fate and fortune; but this they do only *in accordance with the laws of Providence*. If temperance promote health, and industry increase our substance—if intelligence and good conduct procure esteem, and perseverance is rewarded by success—this is the order God Himself has instituted, for He determines the means as well as the end. Yet in numberless cases His appointments are executed by Himself with little or no co-operation on our part. He fixes the time of our birth, the bounds of our habitation, and the period of our continuance upon earth. "The number of our years is with Him, and the measure of our days, which we cannot pass." "There is an appointed time for man upon earth;" and when that time comes to its period, no vigour of constitution can sustain us, no physician's skill can dismiss disease, no anxiety of surrounding friends can procure a reprieve, no want of preparation on our part can obtain a respite: go we must when Death calls; nor will all our prayers, and tears, and terrors, prevail with him to delay for a moment the execution of his commission. Although at present we enjoy health, and

comfort, and prosperity, we cannot, by any prudence or precaution, surely bind these pleasant influences so as to retain them; nor can we contend against the enthralling power of calamity, disease, and death, if these have a commission to cast their bands around us.

How important is it, my friends, that we should be earnest and faithful in improving the varying dispensations of Providence which are successively appointed for our trial! "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity *consider*: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should leave no state untried behind him." If the candle of the Lord shine upon your tabernacle, and shed upon you and upon your children around you the blessings of health, of domestic comfort, of useful occupation yielding a competent supply of the good things of this life, of religious privilege unfolding before you "the unsearchable riches of Christ," with the infinitude of blessing summed up in the words grace and glory—O recognise the goodness of God in bestowing these blessings, and be instant, be diligent in availing yourselves of your present advantages. "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts," but "serve the Lord with gladness," and with fixed determination to be His whatever change He may appoint you. On the other hand, if darkness rest upon your path, if death have invaded your dwelling and stolen some beloved inmate from your fireside, if disease encroach upon your frame, or disaster of any kind cloud your prospects and depress your spirits, then "hear the rod and Him that appointeth it;" "search and try your ways, and turn unto the Lord;" turn without delay, lest while you tarry He inflict a yet more fatal stroke, and the trial

terminate, not in your edification, but in your destruction. "Call upon me," says He, "in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and ye shall glorify me." We cannot control or alter the arrangements of Providence; let it be our care to improve them.

But we must proceed to another view of the subject.

III. We add, in the third place, He who rules in nature and in providence rules also in the *kingdom of grace*. If, from looking *around*, we look *within*, and withdrawing our regards from the external world, we enter seriously into the *secret chambers of the heart*, we shall find new proofs of our ignorance and weakness, and absolute dependence on the Author of our being. Have you power over your minds and souls, to determine their fate, or even to mould their character according to your own choice? Have you made the trial? How has it succeeded? I presume you confess that you are sinners, chargeable with innumerable transgressions of God's holy law, and therefore exposed to its fearful sentence of condemnation. But can you *loose the bands of guilt*, more rigid and indissoluble than those of winter? Or can you *compel the sweet influences of pardoning mercy and accepting favour*? I am aware, indeed, that to the careless and unenlightened, strangers equally to God and to themselves, salvation seems an easy attainment, dependent on our own will at any time, requiring at most only a few external observances, and a little outward reformation; but how different are the feelings of the awakened soul, instructed in its own obligations and in the claims of God! To *its* anxious apprehension, pardon and salvation seem placed at a hopeless

distance—blessings in value infinite, but infinitely difficult of attainment. *How can I recall the past*, marked as it has been with ingratitude and perverseness, with an idolatrous attachment to earthly things and a base forgetfulness of the Lord of all? *How can I meet the future*, big with terrors, which I can contemplate only with “a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation?” What can I do to expiate my offences, and recover the favour of offended Heaven? Alas, my brother, that question, “*What shall I do to be saved?*” is unanswerable by human wisdom. God only, our offended Sovereign, can remit our offences; it is He only that pardoneth: “*It is God that justifieth.*” And the means He has employed for this end, in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of His own dear Son, afford the clearest demonstration of the foolishness of human wisdom and the impotence of human power in this high concern. So “we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” In this great work is it not manifest that man is nothing, that God is all? Verily, “as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts.”

And, my brethren, in *the work of regeneration*—that process by which the soul is rescued from the love and dominion of sin, and fashioned anew after the image of God, a work not less necessary than redemption itself—man is equally indebted to the sovereign grace of God. Winter, in its gloom, inactivity, and death-like torpor, is emblematic of the natural state of the human soul. In this state “*the light that*

is in us is darkness." Those views of spiritual and eternal things that are furnished by reason and conscience resemble the shadowy uncertain forms revealed by the moon and stars, or the imperfect discoveries made by the seaman pursuing his voyage under a fog. Even when lighted by revelation, our own study brings us only to "the form of knowledge and of truth," not to the reality. We embrace something that resembles the truth—"a form of sound words," correct perhaps in the outline, but cold and inanimate, without ardour, vitality, or power. In this state, with all our knowledge, however orthodox our creed and logical our conclusions, the *will* is sluggish, variable, and reluctant—unpenetrated by conviction—unbroken by the hammer of the law—unmelted by the glow of the gospel—impassive as the earth held in the bands of universal frost. There is no *drawing near to God*, no *delight* in spiritual objects or holy duties; but rather a secret aversion and withdrawing, as from one justly offended, or from society that attracts not sympathy, but imposes restraint. In fine, the *life* is barren and unfruitful, presenting a dreary waste, where you seek in vain for the graces of genuine devotion, or the virtues of true holiness.

But the emblem, in so many points applicable, is inadequate and defective; for while, in the natural world, winter preserves under its snowy mantle the roots and seeds that are again to spring up and yield fruit, *this spiritual winter* comprises no such principle of recovery, but death reigns in all the regions of the soul; so that it is "without strength," and even *dead*, whether in outward formality or in open trespasses and sins. In these circumstances of desolation, canst thou compel the sweet influences of Divine grace, or loose the

bands of seated aversion? Canst thou bring *light* to the darkened understanding, correct its fatal errors, and brighten it with the sunshine of immortal truth? Canst thou *penetrate the icy heart*, and subduing its selfish, worldly, unhallowed affections, inspire it with the fire of heavenly love? Canst thou *change the character of the life*, and rescuing it from the degradation of vice, adorn it with "the fruits of the Spirit, in all righteousness, and goodness, and truth?" No, my brethren, "it is not for the Ethiopian to change his skin, and the leopard its spots." God only, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," can "shine into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ."

And here, no less than in nature and in providence, the goodness of God is ever to be adored. For "He wills not the death of the sinner, but that the sinner turn from his ways and live." Have you not felt that there is a *spring-time* within you, which, if suitably improved to break up your fallow ground and introduce the good seed into your heart, would, in due time, be followed by summer and harvest? You cannot deny it; you feel that God waits to be gracious. Make trial of His mercy. Come to *Him* who is "the way, the truth, and the life." Take to you words and turn to the Lord, saying, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously;" and He "shall be as the dew" to your soul; you shall "*dwell under His shadow, and His fruit shall be sweet to your taste.*"

And now, my dear friends, we have seen the sovereignty, wisdom, and power of God exercised beyond reach of human criticism, in all His operations, whether in nature, providence,

or grace. This has been found in the universal experience of men in past times ; and beyond doubt the Divine government will display the same attributes, will be conducted on the same principles, and regulated by the same laws, in all time to come. God will act independently of man, giving no account of His matters even in employing human agency, yet ever wisely, righteously, and well. And though we, individually, shall soon have "no longer a portion in anything done under the sun," we shall still bear a relation of absolute dependence upon our Creator and Judge, and a relation also of continued connexion with the race to which we belong, and with that moral dispensation under which we have been placed. If we believe in the immortality of the soul, and the *bearing* of our present character upon our future condition, we must feel that all that is most important to us is wrapt up *in the future*, and waits its development there. The dissolution of the body does not destroy the consciousness of the soul, but rather makes way for a vast extension of its range of action and experience, whether in the direction of good or of evil.

In the whole progress of human events the high and holy attributes of the Lord of all will be conspicuous ; in all revolutions, terrible or blissful, it will be "God that worketh all in all ;" but still He will effect His purposes through human instrumentality. What man cannot do without God, God will not do without man ; and while the adversaries of the Most High will be unconscious and unwilling agents in fulfilling His will, His faithful servants shall be "fellow-workers with God," and partakers of the Redeemer's triumphs. And think not that you yourselves, my friends, are excluded

from this honour, or exempted from this duty ; for the whole Church of Christ forms *one body*, of which each member is joined to his Lord and to his fellows. Each member contributes his part to the whole,—each exerts an influence that spreads abroad and reaches onward ; and so also each *day* telling upon each *year*, and *that* again upon each *century*, and that upon each *millennium*, helps the work forward towards the glorious consummation. You yourselves, however weak, are called to be fellow-workers with God, by your *prayers*, your *example*, your *efforts*, operating, though perhaps silently, upon your families, your friends, and the community around you. Your humblest service shall not be forgotten, nor “a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple” lose its reward. You have an interest in all the appointed fortunes of the Church—in her trials and in her prosperity. And though you can neither melt down the ice-bound hardness of the human heart in those who reject the gospel, or infuse the *light* of truth and the *fire* of faith and love, yet you are called in your different spheres to act the part of the husbandman who watches the seasons, and avails himself of the first promise of the spring to enter his plough, and cast in the seed that ripens into the future harvest.

But I call you, my friends, to look beyond the changes that await the Church in this probationary state, whether in sweeping judgments or in signal blessings, to that period of deepest universal interest—the day when “we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ,” “that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether good or bad,” when the King “shall gather all nations before Him, and separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the

goats," and shall declare the righteous sentence, with the facts on which it is grounded, and forthwith carry it into effect. Look forward to that day of the Lord, my brethren. What can man do in contravention of the Divine sentence? "What will you do when He riseth up? and when He speaketh, what will you answer Him?" Oh, let us now submit to that power which none can resist, and adore that holiness which none can impeach, and "flee for refuge to the hope now set before us," embracing the offered salvation, and giving ourselves to that Divine Redeemer who gave Himself for us. And may He to whom it appertains loosen the bands that may in any case have frozen and bound up our hearts from Him, and cause His Holy Spirit to breathe upon us with His softening and fertilising grace, that we may approve ourselves "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified!"

XI.

LIGHT WITHIN DIFFUSES RADIANCE WITHOUT.

“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day : we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”—1 THESS. v. 5.

IN reducing the rude materials of this earth from their primitive chaotic darkness and confusion, to the order and beauty of a well-constituted world, the first work of the Omnipotent was the creation of light—a fact announced by the sacred historian in the brief but sublime sentence, “God said, Let there be light ; and there was light :” and, it is added, “God saw the light, that it was good ; and God divided the light from the darkness : and God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.” In the progress of the creation the light was concentrated in the heavenly bodies, and the sun was appointed its source by day, and the moon its secondary, deputed organ by night. These ordinances have never failed ; and though the earth’s position in relation to the sun in winter, and the moon’s periodical wanings, leave certain portions of the globe to the partial intrusion and temporary prevalence of darkness, still the light has preserved its ascendancy, and has continued to shed its blessings on mankind.

Light is indeed an admirable production of the Creator ;

the fairest, as the first of his works in the arrangement of the world ; the richest and most exquisite of those material gifts which he has brought out of his treasury ; the brightest effect of that wisdom and power which he exerted in the modelling of this lower world, and the harbinger, and, as it were, *expositor* of all his other operations. This is that which imparts their beauty to all the objects that delight the eye of man ; since, in absence of light, *beauty*, as referring to material things, could have no existence. This gives to nature its variety of rich and lovely tints,—to the skies their morning grey, their ethereal blue, their fleecy clouds, their mellow glow when irradiated by the evening sun,—to the earth the varied mantle it derives from the green of its pastures, the brown of its forests, the crystal of its floods, the whiteness of its winter covering of snow, or the golden yellow of its harvests. This brings the eye acquainted with those forms and appearances that enable us to judge of the figure, the distance, the motions, the colour of visible objects ; conveying to us all the discoveries made by the sight,—all the knowledge and all the pleasure we derive from the survey of the Divine workmanship in the heavens, in the earth, and in the seas,—as well as from the inspection of the operations of art, the actions of men, and the expression of intelligence and feeling in that index of the mind, the human countenance.

Is not light the joy and life of the material world, diffusing gladness over the universe ? The birds welcome its dawning with their songs,—the flowers unfold their beauties at its approach,—the flocks and herds, and all the animated tribes, awake and bound for joy under its enlivening rays. Con-

cealing its essence from the eye that it enlightens, and eluding the researches of art and science, it draws from all an acknowledgment of its happy and beneficial influence. Its properties are truly astonishing. So rapid is its flight, that its passage from one end of the earth to the other is instantaneous; and it is calculated that it requires only a few minutes to come to us from the immeasurable distance of the sun—whence, falling in parallel rays, it illumines the whole face of the earth in the twinkling of an eye. And how admirable its virtue and influence in conveying warmth and activity to all things, being apparently the grand medium of communicating life and active power to the whole vegetable and animal creation!

We wonder not that that which is so valuable in the natural world, should be assumed in the Word of God, which is the interpreter of his works, as the emblem of all that is excellent in the spiritual world. As revealing to the eye the figure, position, and various qualities of visible things, light is an emblem of *truth*, which assigns to every thing its real attributes; and of *knowledge*, which apprehends and forms a just estimate of all things. As preserving its own pure and simple essence, without mixing with the objects it approaches, or being contaminated by them, it is the emblem of that *moral purity* which refuses to mingle with the pollutions of the world, and keeps itself from all fellowship with the workers of iniquity. As conveying life and health to other things, it is the emblem of the salutary and beneficial influence of true piety. As imparting joy and gladness, it is an emblem of the happiness attendant on true goodness: in fine, it is used as the emblem of God Himself, who is emphatically

called "the Father of lights," and of whom it is said, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

Darkness is the absence of light, and in an ordinary sense its opposite. In this lower world it had precedence of light; for while the earth was unproductive of those forms of existence which require light for their development, "darkness was upon the face of the deep." And after the introduction of light, it still retained a periodical influence, intruding, as it were, into those portions of space which the active principle of light did not occupy. And in this partial extent it doubtless, like all the other Divine appointments, contributes to the well-being of the universe. Who feels not the salutary influence of the alternations of day and night? How welcome the shades of the evening, after the dazzling glare—the refreshing coolness of the night, after the oppressive heat of the day! The return of night suspends the toils of man and beast, invites all nature to repose; and in conjunction with sleep, to which it is favourable, it hushes the passions that agitate the human breast, reminds man of his weakness and dependence, and admonishes him of the approach of that night that shall terminate his earthly probation. But though useful in the physical world, darkness is in a moral sense emblematical of all that is evil. As concealing from our view the objects around us, and preludeing a right apprehension of them, it is the emblem of *ignorance and error*; as favouring the machinations of wicked men, and shrouding them from detection, it is the emblem of *sin*—sin which hates the light that exposes it to observation; as associated with danger and terror, it intimates the perilous nature and final punishment of guilt: in fine, the grand enemy of all

goodness, the devil, in reference to his character of the deceiver, the defiler, the destroyer of men, is called "the prince of darkness," and his kingdom, "the kingdom of darkness."

Such being the import of the terms light and darkness, I need scarcely add that the expression, "the children of light," signifies those who are distinguished by the qualities of which light is the emblem, and describes the character of true believers, as opposed to that of unrenewed men, and even of their former selves. It presents the Christian in a striking and glorious form, as clothed with the attributes of the first and fairest product of creative power, and should certainly suggest to us a serious inquiry whether this excellent character belong to us—how it may be attained, and how preserved. We implore the Divine guidance and blessing while we call your attention to the view here given us of real believers. What are the characters which the apostle ascribes to them when he says, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness?"

I. The children of light are distinguished by the *knowledge of the truth*, in opposition to ignorance and error. As in the material world darkness preceded light, and was banished only by the Divine command, so in the present state of man, that ignorance, of which darkness is the emblem, precedes the light of saving knowledge. This had been signally exemplified in the case of those whom the apostle addressed in the epistle before us, many of whom had, doubtless, been Gentiles, like those elsewhere described by him as "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life

of God, through the ignorance that was in them because of the blindness of their hearts." Before the coming of Christ a dense and impenetrable night covered the heathen world, involving mankind in worse than Egyptian darkness, so that there was no spiritual light in their dwellings. They saw neither the glory of God nor the real circumstances of man ; and, having no motive for spiritual exertion, none of them rose from his place to aspire after better things. The speculations of philosophy served only to entangle in endless error, while the perverse bias of the human heart led them to the rejection and stifling of those intimations of truth and duty which conscience occasionally forces upon men. The Jews, we admit, were more enlightened, having the oracles of God in their hands, and His character and government depicted in the facts of their history : yet the light they possessed before the manifestation of the Saviour was faint and obscure ; being indeed, as is said of the word of prophecy, "a light shining in a dark place," a lamp glimmering amid surrounding darkness. If the predictions of the prophets may be described as *stars* shining in the firmament of the Church, yet does not the very brightness that attaches to the stars indicate the reign of night—the prevalence of that obscurity which they suffice to pierce but not to dispel ? and does not the first ray of the sun shooting above the horizon, and ushering in the gladsome day, extinguish all the feeble fires of night ? Accordingly, even the Jews are represented as having been, before the coming of Christ, involved in nightly gloom ; and the Messiah was promised as that *Sun* at whose dawn "the day-spring from on high was to visit them, to give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death."

Scattering at once the gross darkness of heathenism, and the shadowy forms and emblems of the Mosaic ritual, the gospel of Christ brought to light all that is precious and important in divine and heavenly truth. It made known the true character of the blessed God, the consistency of His adorable attributes, the relations He bears to man, the rules of His government, the decrees of His righteousness, the dispensations of His grace. It declared the truths we are required to believe, the duties we are called to perform. It discovered clearly the way of salvation and the path of life, revealing all that is necessary to our present safety and our everlasting happiness. "I," said its Divine Author, "am the light of the world ; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

But do all who are favoured with the gospel see the light, and walk in it, and approve themselves the children of the light? No, my brethren ; for need I tell you that in order to enjoy the benefit of the light it is not enough that the sun be risen, but it is further necessary that there be an eye to see, and that eye in a healthy state, capable of performing its functions ; since, if the organ be covered with a scale, or the optic nerve be essentially injured, the clearest light will fail of its purpose. Now the pride and prejudice native to the human mind operate as a film to quench the intellectual eye in reference to spiritual and divine things. For the things of this world, man retains the light of intelligence ; and the least enlightened in respect of religion are often clear-sighted and acute in the pursuits of interest or of pleasure, in the exercise of worldly policy, in the study of human science : but when the light of heavenly truth approaches, their discern-

ment fails them, and the eye becomes dim, like that of the bird of night under the beams of the sun. Our apostle expressly declares that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Searching the things of God with an unenlightened understanding is like trying to open a lock with the wrong key. We are repulsed in our endeavour we know not why, and exclaim with Nicodemus, "*How can these things be ?*" How many are there of the intelligent, the prudent, the wise of this world, who never find out where the deficiency lies, but treat the great truths of the gospel with neglect and contempt, as unworthy of attention, or incapable of rewarding it ; who put them away at once as unintelligible and irrational, incompatible with all their views and reasonings ; who continually repel their practical influence as opposed to their wishes, and hostile to all their chosen pursuits ? "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

This, my brethren, was also once the character of the children of light ; but their eyes have been opened to behold "wondrous things." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ." That which formerly they rejected as fantastical or unimportant—I mean serious, spiritual religion—has changed its character, and become the "one thing needful," even the life of their souls ; for what so needful to the alarmed sinner as the pardon of those sins that separate him from God—as

restoration to His favour who holds in His hand his everlasting destiny? That which was once despised as contemptible, now appears all-glorious; for what so honourable as the approbation of the King of kings, as a place in His family, with a character and disposition moulded in His image? That which once they disliked as a gloomy, melancholy thing, now appears the source of purest happiness; for what is comparable to "the love of God shed abroad throughout the heart by the Holy Ghost," to Christ reigning there, the source of life, "the hope of glory?" Instructed by the Word and Spirit of God, light shines within and around; they see the glory of God in the person and work of Christ, see "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embracing each other." The path of life lies open before them; and perceiving both its difficulties and encouragements, both the strength of their adversaries and the power and faithfulness of their Divine Leader, they walk on in safety. And though their knowledge be far from perfect, though their spiritual vision be feeble or obscured, their eyes subject to dimness and infirmity, yet they *love the light*, they "*follow on to know the Lord*," and "looking unto Jesus" they prosecute their race with patience, and are not suffered greatly to err. That *love of the truth* which adheres to them characterises them as children of the light—"He that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

II. They are distinguished by a principle of *holiness*, in opposition to the love and practice of what is offensive to God. In Scripture the appellation of darkness is often

applied to a tortuous course of conduct ; for sin in its own nature cannot bear the light—in its grosser forms universally condemned, and in all its forms incapable of enduring a close inspection. Sins of the life are called “works of darkness,” “unfruitful works of darkness ;” and sins of the affections are characterised by the same term, as in 1 John ii. 9, 11, “He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness.” And indeed the darkness of ignorance is naturally associated with the darkness of vice, and the blindness of the understanding with that of the heart. “If the eye” of the understanding “be *single*, the whole body,” comprising the will, affections, and actions, “will be full of light ; but if the eye be *evil*, the whole body will be full of darkness.” If the guide be blind, the other faculties placed under his direction will stumble continually ; and the guide himself, partaker in nature’s pravity, suffers himself to be led astray by the perverseness of those whom it is his duty to govern. If the mind, through the influence of prejudice, of passion, of the allurements of the world and the flesh, embrace error for truth, evil for good, what can be expected but that the man, betrayed by his counsellors, should advance with rapid steps in the path of ruin ? He who has reasoned himself into a false idea of the character of God, assimilating it to his own, will naturally walk in the way of his own heart, still flattering himself that he is not mistaken and has nothing to fear. He who sees no beauty in the Saviour, and feels no need of Him, cannot be expected to receive and delight in Him with the believer’s love. He who has no perception of the excellence of holiness will not seek after it, nor even apply himself to the object of leading a life devoted to God. If you contem-

plate the manners, inclinations, sentiments, and modes of life of the greater part of men as they act in the world, you cannot but regard them as in darkness. What can be said of those aspirants who, in contempt of "glory, honour, and immortality," grasp so eagerly at phantoms of worldly rank and advancement, which, when obtained, do but mock the possessor, and prepare him for the more severe and fatal fall? What of the *covetous*, those idolaters of vain and perishing possessions that cannot be retained, or cure, in our extremity, the slightest malady of the body, or pang of the heart? of the *voluptuary*, who abandons himself to momentary indulgences, followed by lengthened sorrows? What of the *revengeful*, who makes his happiness consist in the ruin of his neighbour? These all—the assiduous slaves of base tormenting passions—are they not, in the Scripture sense, manifestly under the power of delusion and in darkness?

The children of light pursue a different course. "The eyes of their understanding having been enlightened," they come forth from the broad road in which they originally walked, and pursue the narrow and less frequented path of holiness and life. Their labour is to "put off the old man, and to put on the new." The commandment of the Lord is "a lamp, and His law is light," and by that law they regulate their goings. That Holy Spirit who has opened their eyes guides them in their path, and His "fruit in them is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." Their inquiry is, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" The believer's life ought to bear an analogy in truthfulness and consistency with what we observe in those organs of light, "the moon and stars which He hath ordained." The planets irradiated by the sun,

in respect of that great luminary, may be called *children of light*; and accordingly, in proportion to their capacity, they reflect the brightness of the sun, and impart to the observer the light they receive. So should it be with *us* followers of Christ; our light must shine before men, "that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our heavenly Father." The planets also, ruled by the sun's attraction, in their orbits pursue a steady course, never deviating from the path prescribed them; and so should we ever keep our eye fixed on the "Sun of Righteousness," and still, in every part of our progress, acknowledge His attractive and authoritative influence. This true believers do, not under the impulse of physical necessity, but under the power of filial love—as "children of light," who love their Father's will, and delight to run in the way of His commandments.

III. They are distinguished by the *usefulness of their character*, in opposition to the pernicious influence of the workers of iniquity. For though, in the natural world, the night and darkness are useful in their place, yet in a spiritual sense darkness is only productive of evil. Error serves only to deceive—sin only to beguile and destroy; and every one who promotes the one or the other, injures his fellows. The influence of such principles and such individuals is chilling and desolating, as the lengthened night of the polar regions, which spreads sterility over the earth, and, if continued, would destroy all life, vegetable and animal. Men are ever exercising an influence, direct and indirect, on one another. He who forgets God, encourages others to forget Him; he who is unrestrained in vice, emboldens others to

trample on the barrier of conscience, and to rush fearlessly into sin. And is this no aggravation of our guilt? Are we not responsible to God for stirring up, according to our ability, and the extent of our sphere, a universal rebellion against Him, and for contributing to the condemnation, not only of those with whom we associate, but of the multitudes whom they may mislead?

The children of light fail not, even involuntarily, to diffuse a salutary influence around them. Not only are they "blameless and harmless, as sons of God, without rebuke," but they "shine as lights in a dark world, holding forth," in their conduct and conversation, "the word and rule of life." Such come to be esteemed sure guides, men who know the country they travel, whom strangers, dubious of their way, and knowing that these make it their daily journey, need not hesitate to follow. They are as a pilot skilled in the perilous passes of his own rocky coast, whose vessel breaks the way, leaving a luminous track by which the fleet may steer their course in safety after him. Christians are to be *witnesses* for God, "*epistles of Christ*;" they are so to walk that others may see in them the mind and will of God, and, conforming to their example, may advance in the paths of righteousness.

IV. They are distinguished by a *blessedness* peculiar to themselves. The advantages ministered by the natural light we all appreciate, and are touched with compassion for those who are deprived of them. For how gloomy does it seem to pass life in perpetual darkness! and what helplessness, what perplexity, what danger does this state involve! But if to one born blind it were an inexpressible happiness to obtain

sight—if such an one, receiving the blessing from Him who “gave sight to many that were blind,” were transported with joy when he beheld the glory and beauty of the universe—when he saw around him the flowery fields, the waving corn, the stately trees—when he beheld above him the vast and magnificent canopy of heaven—when he observed on every side so many creatures of various shape and colour, with all that is interesting in the actions and countenance of man,—should not a still purer joy pervade the bosom of him who is made to behold the imperishable beauties of the spiritual world—of that “Sun of Righteousness” which reveals the brightness of the Father’s glory—of that light of the gospel which conveys truth to the soul, transforming truth, that changes it into the image of the Lord—of that blessed eternity which awaits the righteous—of those “new heavens and that new earth” where they shall dwell, inhabiting “the city that hath foundations,” and drinking “the pure water of the river of life?” Yes, it is the light of truth, even of the gospel of the grace of God, that conveys peace and happiness to the soul. Till this is found, we “walk in darkness, not knowing whither we go.” But this brings life and immortality to light, still presenting new beauties and new glories to the instructed eye, till it conduct us to the heavenly Canaan, and place us in the mansions of the Father’s house, there to behold “the King in His beauty,” and to be “satisfied when we awake with His likeness.”

My brethren, if this light of knowledge, of purity, of beneficence, of blessedness, belong to *any* of our race, why should *we* here present be excluded from it? Why should any one of us prefer darkness to light? If you have not yet seen the

light of truth in the gospel of Christ, is it not because you have not set yourself with serious determination to find it? If you see not the glory of God shining in Jesus Christ, must we not conclude that you have not looked for it there? May it not be that you are suffering the god of this world to blind your eyes, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine into them? There is a Divine light in it which only the scale over our own eye, the home-bred mist of prejudice and sin, hinders us from discovering. But if that obstruction has hitherto intercepted your sight, is it not time to have it removed? If you suspect yourself to have been betrayed by those perverting influences that obscure the mental vision, and lead us to attempt to hide our real character from God, from man, and even from our own conscience, let them now be rent asunder and cast away from you, that the light of truth may at once break in, and guide you to safety and to life. If heretofore you have encouraged others in evil ways, from this time enter on a new course, and, saving yourselves, seek to save others with you. If you have been living without God and without Christ, what is *darkness* if *this* is not? "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Behold, now the Saviour presents Himself; "He says to the prisoners, Go forth, and to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves." Hear, for your encouragement, His gracious promise, "I will bring the blind in a way that they know not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known, I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." "Yet a little while is the light with

you : walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you ; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

And you, my brethren, who have known the truth, put on fresh alacrity, and exercise your strength, that your conversation may be in all things as becometh the gospel. Think "what manner of persons ye ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." But what exhortation can I give so suitable as that which immediately follows the words of our text? "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others ; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night ; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love ; and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

XII.

SALT THAT IS GENUINE—SALT THAT IS
SALTLESS.

"Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."—LUKE xiv. 34, 35.

AMONG the substances that enter into the composition of this globe of earth, salt is a very important one, being of essential use in the economy of the world, and eminently conducive to the preservation of human life. It may be regarded as the grand conservative principle of nature, whose office is to keep this earth, the habitation of man, in a wholesome state, to check the progress of decay and corruption, and promote the health and wellbeing of the animal world. To fit it for these important purposes, the All-wise Creator, who communicates to every element its peculiar character, has given it the quality of being soluble in water, and has thus made it capable of diffusing itself over the whole globe, impregnating the various departments of nature, and penetrating the finest fibres of vegetable and animal substances—a hidden agent that, by means of the element that holds it in solution, conveys its salutary influence to every region of creation. Suspended in strong infusion in the ocean, it preserves its

immense reservoirs from putrefaction, and makes them the means of conveying health to the shores they wash, and salubrity to the atmosphere that rises above them; while it further serves, by increasing the gravity of the waters, to aid in buoying up the tribes that inhabit and the ships that navigate them. It is largely deposited in the heart of the earth, in rocks and strata. It is also found to enter into the composition of plants, some of which yield it in large quantities, and even to form an ingredient in the bodies of animals. If this element were withdrawn, the great deep, we have reason to think, would become a putrid pool, the air would consequently be a pestilential vapour, and vegetable and animal life would quickly be extinct. I need scarcely add that, in a separate form, extracted from the briny waters, or from the bowels of the earth, it serves many important purposes—that it preserves the food of man from premature decay, and thus enables him to pursue his course on the sea, or in regions where no fresh supplies can be found; that, when administered in smaller quantity, it gives a relish to that which would otherwise be unsavoury; that, besides seasoning his food, it stimulates and assists his digestive powers, and in certain forms becomes a valuable medicine. In surveying the important uses to which it is subservient, we readily assent to the declaration with which the text opens, “*Salt is good;*” nor need we dispute the statement that follows, “*But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill.*” If salt lose its appropriate quality, that in which consists its whole value, no other substance can restore that quality; itself the preserving and restorative principle, if it

lose this power, it has no other quality to recommend it, and there is no other agent whence it can receive it again. It becomes utterly worthless, whether as a stimulant or as a manure—fit only to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

Such is our Lord's declaration taken literally. But I need not say that this is not the lesson He meant to teach us, but only the medium through which the lesson is conveyed—not the truth intended, but its illustration—not the jewel, but the casket in which it is contained. It was not a fact in natural history our Lord had in view, but a fact in practical religion and in spiritual experience. And the peculiar and universal importance of the truth conveyed in this metaphor, He intimates in the words, "*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*" It becomes us to inquire into a truth so emphatically enforced by Him whose words shall endure even when heaven and earth shall pass away.

The metaphor of *salt* is sometimes used to denote *the doctrine of the gospel*—"The truth as it is in Jesus." This seems its meaning in the words, "*Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another;*" and in the words, "*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.*" But in the passage before us our Lord is speaking, not of the doctrine of the gospel, but of the men who profess it: His words refer to the Christian character, considered in itself and in its influence on others. In the preceding context He admonishes the multitude of the high demands He makes on His disciples, and of the necessity, before embarking in His service, of serious consideration, and of the entire renunciation of selfish aims; and this admonition He follows up in the text by warning them, that, if the distinctive peculiarities of the

Christian character be lost, all is lost that is worthy to bear the name. In a similar manner, the metaphor is applied in the sermon on the mount, not to His doctrine but to His disciples, "*Ye are the salt of the earth* ; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" The words before us, then, declare *the excellence and usefulness of the Christian character, as exemplified in those who maintain it faithfully and consistently* ; and the loss of all excellence, the shipwreck of all valuable attainments and of all good hope, in those who forsake and abandon the principles and spirit with which they once started on the Christian race.

I. *The excellence and usefulness of the Christian character.* The disciples of Christ are destined to the same office in the moral world that salt supplies in the natural—namely, to check the progress of corruption, and diffuse salubrity and health ; and while they preserve their appropriate character, they fulfil this high destination. Sound in principle and exemplary in conduct themselves, they serve to arrest corruption in others ; savouring the things of God, they communicate the same unction to others ; active and beneficent, they extend a beneficial influence around them.

The faithful followers of Christ are like "*good salt*," in respect of those *principles of truth* which they embrace and maintain. For error corrupts the mind, and, insinuating itself through its faculties, "will eat as doth a canker," and blend in all its communications ; truth is the healing salt that arrests its progress and defeats the operation of the poison. Now the mind of man, in this our fallen state, is predisposed to error ; and its vitiated affections lead it often

on points of moral interest to evade conviction and to grasp at wrong conclusions. Disliking the obligations imposed by the truth, it seeks to escape from them by following devious theories, and losing itself in the labyrinths of human opinion. Its errors relate to subjects the most important, involving our highest duties and most momentous interests. On these subjects, men of the greatest sagacity in other things have too often been at once the dupes and the propagators of the most fatal mistakes ; nor are any exempt from the perverting influence of that spiritual incapacity that pervades the human mind, save those who are awakened to receive the instructions conveyed to them by the Word and Spirit of God. The unrenewed mind, shrinking from the pure and holy Majesty of heaven, feigns to itself a God of character congenial with its own, who views its conduct with an indifferent eye, or charitably connives at its chosen sins. Vain in imagination, proud and wilful in heart, it rejects the relentless charges brought, by the law of God and the testimony of inspiration, against mankind at large, as having departed from God in ways universally and radically sinful ; and resisting the imputation of sinfulness, it refuses to accept the offered Saviour, and will neither assent to the testimony of God respecting the gift of His Son, nor submit to the degradation of being saved altogether by grace through another. Regarding only the things of this life as reasonable objects of consideration, the natural mind puts away from it the concerns of a life to come ; and eternal judgment, with all its consequences, is dismissed as a fable, or at least is treated as a mystery of which it is impossible to know the certainty. For even where the truths of revelation are admitted specula-

tively, there is a *heart-error* that renders them all unavailing—a secret scepticism, a real indifference, that frustrates all their power.

Now amid the general, and indeed universal prevalence of this *unbelief of heart*, that paralyses and defeats all that may be said of God and eternity, the disciples of Christ are *the salt* that preserves the sanative principles of truth in the world. These know and acknowledge the true God—Jehovah, the great “*I Am*,” the Creator, Proprietor, Law-giver, Judge of all. These have “fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ,” through the Holy Spirit, the Enlightener and the Comforter; and “what they have seen and heard they declare” to others, inviting them to similar fellowship. These confess Christ before men; and, having themselves known His grace and power, they speak as partakers, not as simply witnesses; and while they glory only in His cross, they beseech men by His mercies to trust in Him, and give themselves to so gracious a Master. Knowing, by personal experience, the depth of the disease, but knowing also the strength of the remedy, they seek to bring others to the great Physician. The cross of Christ has carried to their hearts a profound conviction of the malignity of sin that required such a sacrifice, and a no less profound persuasion of the love of God that provided and sets it before them. In the favour and presence of this God they place their happiness—they “endure as seeing Him who is invisible”—“looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the Lord Jesus, when He shall be glorified in His saints, and admired in them that believe.” These are the powerful and practical principles that influence them: and

their testimony, arising from genuine conviction, fails not to impress the minds of others, and in many cases to arrest the progress of error, and establish those who hear them in the truth. They are God's witnesses ; and the truths they declare, like the salt of the prophet, heal the waters of human opinion, that were previously "naught"—that is, corrupt and worthless, producing only sterility and death.

Again, the true disciples are like good salt *in respect of that temper of mind, and those good and gracious affections*, which they cherish and manifest. For the truths of the gospel, when received in faith, fail not to renovate the heart and inspire it with corresponding dispositions: they necessarily awaken an unfeigned piety and holy reverence toward God, a simple, child-like dependence on Christ, a genuine benevolence toward men, a true humility, a spirit of sympathy with the afflicted, a desire to do good to all, a disposition to forgive injuries and to overcome evil with good. Now this temper of mind has a healing efficacy: like salt, it is diffusive, and tends to preserve the atmosphere of life from the putrid exhalations of selfishness, envy, and malevolence ; it gives also a grateful relish and gracious aspect to society, fostering and maintaining in healthful exercise the substantial blessings of mutual esteem, friendship, and harmony.

In a word, the true disciples are like good salt *in respect of their whole conduct in life*; which, while they act in character, cannot fail to have a beneficial influence, since it both presents a model to be copied, and suggests the motives and arguments that commend it. For their whole manner of life, if candidly interpreted, shews that they are governed by high and heavenly principles—that they are "not of the

world, but of the Father." It were easy to illustrate the happy effect emanating from such characters in the various relations of life. How does a *Christian parent*, by wise instruction and consistent conduct, form the principles and manners of his children, training them up in the fear of the Lord! A *Christian master* carries a preponderating influence over those placed under his direction, as servants, scholars, or apprentices. A *Christian magistrate*, walking consistently, and steadily obeying Him from whom all power is derived, is a blessing to the community, not only by the right exercise of his authority, but by the light and influence his example sheds abroad. A *Christian servant* is not a cipher in the household, but so serves as to shew allegiance and bring honour to the Master who is in heaven. In every situation the *faithful disciple of Christ* can scarcely come in contact with others without conveying impressions favourable to virtue, piety, and benevolence. We are all linked one to another; and as he who takes the wrong course draws others along with him, so he who takes the right is not left to walk alone. If some are hardened, others are persuaded; if some oppose, others learn to obey the truth. The salt of the earth diffuses its flavour, the light of the world sheds abroad its beams, and others seeing their good works, glorify their heavenly Father.

Such is the excellence of the Christian character, but remark—

II. *The ruined and unhappy condition of those who abandon that character.* If he who bears the Christian name lose the distinctive qualities of his Christianity—if

he relinquish those principles of truth which he has professed—if he forsake the Christian temper—if, forgetful of heavenly things, he immerse himself in the world and live for himself, for gain, for pleasure, and not for Christ,—alas! “*the glory is departed*,” the usefulness of his character as a guide or example is at an end ; he becomes, if not a betrayer, yet a deserter, worthless and contemptible, fit only to be “*cast out, and trodden under foot*.”

Now in this representation our Lord certainly meant not to enter into recondite doctrines of religion, or either to assert or deny the immutability of the Divine purposes, or the certain perseverance, as it is termed, of the saints. He speaks of things according to their visible appearances and manifest effects. He sets before us salt which is good, and salt which, having lost its savour, ceases to be salt. He does not meddle with the inquiry whether the genuine salt can ever change its characteristic nature, or whether the reprobate salt was ever salt at all ; but under the emblem, the one good, the other destitute of the essential and appropriate qualities, He describes two kinds of professors—the one whose goodness is formed of solid enduring materials, the other where it is “as the morning cloud and early dew that passeth away.” The former He applauds, but points out the unprofitable character and dishonoured fate of the latter. Regarding the appellation *salt* as applicable generally to all who profess Christianity, there are different classes of persons in whom the sad representation before us is verified.

There are those who, though bearing the Christian name, have never felt any serious religious impressions, or even pretended to them. They are called Christians, having their

birth in a Christian country, being baptized, and not having renounced their baptism; while yet there is nothing in their character or habits to distinguish them from *the children of the world*. The *principles of faith* they neither know nor inquire into; and the *rules of morality* they follow only as enforced by natural conscience, and required by the general *sentiment* of those among whom they live. Now, I speak not of *these* as "*salt that has lost its savour*," because *that* cannot be lost which has never been possessed or claimed. The expression of our text implies a *change* from what is good, or appears good, to that which is evil.

Passing by, therefore, the multitudes occupying the *broad way*, whose religion is but a name, having nothing in it that is marked or tangible, I proceed to speak of those who have received some impression of Divine things, and have made profession of faith in God and in Christ, yet afterwards depart and prove unfaithful. Some convictions they have felt, some desires have been awakened, some resolutions have been formed, to choose the good part. Like the young man mentioned in the Gospel, they have come into the presence of Christ, saying, with seeming earnestness, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"* or, it may be, like Judas, they have engaged in His service, and been numbered with His disciples; but after a while, seduced by temptation, acting on a heart unrenewed and unguarded, they have fallen away from Christ, either *totally*, so as to "walk no more with Him," or *partially*, so as greatly to dishonour His name. For a time they have appeared promising, like blossoms in the spring, but a blight has succeeded,—“the blossom has

* Matt. xix. 16.

gone up as dust, and the root proved to be rottenness." This sad result is not always arrived at by the same steps, but the following particulars often enter into its progress and intimate the danger of those in whom they are found:—

1. The salt loses its savour *when professing Christians lose their relish for those Divine truths that peculiarly distinguish the gospel and make it what it is.* These truths, received into the heart, furnish the principles of the spiritual life : these give the salt its savour : and if these are no longer cherished, the character they inspire ceases to exist. If those doctrines of the Word of God that serve to *humble the sinner* become distasteful, and the mind choose rather to palliate its offences than to part with them,—if a man learn to reject the unwelcome admonitions of conscience, and to be on good terms with his sins, "flattering himself in his own eyes," has he not lost the humility and vigilance that are the safeguard of the Christian character, the genuine salt of the truth ? If those doctrines that *exalt the Saviour*, presenting Him as "the true God and eternal life," are no longer precious, and come to be viewed with dislike as exacting too much of man's credulity, or imposing too humbling an obligation, alas ! has he not lost the very *life of the soul*, the foundation of all that is strong in its confidence, and all that is distinctive and divine in his object of belief ? If the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as the grand author of all grace, be viewed with displeasure and jealousy, as savouring of enthusiasm or invading our mental independence, is there not room to fear that that Spirit is forsaking the soul, and is about to abandon it to itself ? He who treats the truths of the gospel as matters of little moment or of dubious certainty, who *loves them not* and

holds them not tenaciously, quits the rock of salvation ; and, “tossed to and fro with every wind,” is in danger of “making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.”

2. The salt loses its savour *when professing Christians lose their relish for the duties of religion*. As a holy taste for spiritual duties is awakened by the truth received in love, so a decay of all holy affections is the natural consequence of a departure from the truth. In such a state the professor may, under the influence of custom or of conscience, continue to read the Scriptures, to repeat his daily prayers, and to visit the house of God ; but these exercises will soon be little better than a form. He no longer eats “the hidden manna,” or drinks of the spiritual rock—no longer goes to God as his Father in sweet communion, or embraces his brethren in the ardour of Christian charity. In his outward conduct there may be nothing so reprehensible as to awaken censure, but the spirit of religion is departed, leaving only its semblance behind.

3. The salt loses its savour *when professing Christians imbibe the love and become conformed to the spirit of the world*. If the mind find not pleasure in spiritual things, it will seek it in earthly things ; if God prove a wilderness to the soul that is alienated from Him, the world will put on its smiling aspect as a possession fruitful of enjoyment to those who cultivate it. It often happens that those who, in the natural simplicity of youth, felt some power and attraction in religion, when they come to engage in the busy pursuits of the world, lose their former impressions, and at length proceed to repel its demands as interfering with their necessary avocations, to reject its restraints as fettering their progress,

showing but too plainly that while God's claims have touched only the surface of the heart, the world has won its inner affections. "These are they who when they have heard, go forth, and the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." These cares impose themselves as necessary cares—these riches present themselves as the means of getting and of doing good—these pleasures inveigle the affections, falsely promising to gratify without debasing the man. But amid all the apologies and extenuations suggested by a deceitful heart, these *thorns* render the word unfruitful, and cheat the soul of the inestimable blessings obtained by those who receive and obey the truth.

It is observable that when our Lord had warned His disciples to "take heed and beware of covetousness," the example He gave of this sin was not that of one who in the pursuit of money was unjust and oppressive, or in the use of it extravagant and dissipated; but of "a certain rich man, whose ground brought forth plentifully," and whose only object was, first to procure a fortune, and then to enjoy it. Now this is a frequent character, and one generally approved and commended; for "men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." And on this account the love of the world is the more dangerous, as, in place of incurring censure, it often obtains commendation. It is perhaps of all sins that which may be best indulged without abandoning a profession of religion. Sins of profaneness, sensuality, or injustice, are condemned readily; and he who obviously practises them must give up his pretensions to religion; but a man may "love the world and the things of it," and yet retain ostensibly his

religious character. The principle that actuates him may be concealed, its effects may be applauded as proofs of diligence, energy, economy, and shrewdness, which, being utterly apart from the love of God, and all thought of responsibility to Him, can meet only with His condemnation.

4. The salt loses its savour *when the professor of religion falls into open immorality*. And this is not unfrequently the final catastrophe consequent on the indulgence of the love of the world, and conformity to its ways. First the sinful desire is allowed in secret, with no care to watch against temptation, and at length God's help, being unsought, is withdrawn, the checks of providence are taken out of the way, and the moment of temptation finds the sinner abandoned to himself, and to the power of his spiritual enemy.

Finally, The salt has lost its savour *when the soul learns to vindicate its errors and without shame to persist in them*,—when reproof is unwelcome, when expostulation is offensive, and the man is anxious rather to defend his character than amend his ways,—when, deaf to admonition and rebuke, he wilfully yields himself to the snare of the devil, to be “led captive at his will.” How calamitous such termination of what was hopeful in its beginning!

In connexion with what has gone before, allow me to suggest, in the way of warning to the Upright, that the *good salt*, though not wholly losing its nature, may suffer loss in respect both of its inherent qualities and of its influence on others; that if the believer would not fall before temptation, he must *watch and pray*,—if he would *live* in the Spirit, he must *walk* in the Spirit,—if he would not *lose what he has wrought*, he must “*build himself up in his most holy*

faith,"—if he would not incur the charge of "leaving his first love," he must "keep himself in the love of God," and continue "growing in grace." *Declension* and *backsliding* in the spiritual life may well bring doubts and fears with them. Whatever difference there may be in God's sight betwixt the tree that is altogether *dead*, and that in which the functions of life are only suspended for a time by drought or frost, that difference is often not distinguishable by man, to whose eye "the tree is known by its fruit;" and it is only the *restored influence* of the living principle, shewing itself in faith, love, and new obedience, that can demonstrate the reality of its existence, bring peace to the conscience of the individual, and reinstate him in usefulness and good estimation among his brethren.

Before closing I may add that the threatening of our text is often verified in *churches* and *communities*, as well as in individuals. Where are now the *Seven Churches* of Asia, the "golden candlesticks" among which Christ walked, which, when they forsook the truth, had their light quenched, and their healthful influence turned into corruption? Where are the succeeding Churches of the East—of Alexandria, Antioch, Chalcedon, Constantinople,—first enslaved by superstition and mutual intolerance, and then abandoned to Mohammedan tyranny? Where, especially, is the once honoured *Church of Rome*, which, giving itself up to the politics and pollutions of the world, became the very *Anti-christ* of prophecy, "the mother of abominations?" And, in our own times, how many churches are there, both on the Continent and in our own land, which, relinquishing the faith of the gospel for errors of human invention, under the

forms of Unitarianism, Rationalism, Pantheism, universal Scepticism, have lost all vital and beneficial influence, and become the deceivers and destroyers of souls? And are there not *family dwellings*, once the habitations of the righteous, that are now silent in prayer and praise, and active only in the service of the god of this world?

We should remark, my friends, that it cannot be without a *purpose* that our Lord on this occasion winds up His doctrine with His emphatic summons, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." We have all a part in His words as scholars or as truants—as faithful or as negligent—as commended or as reproved. Let us snuff our candles that our light may shine abroad, stir up our decaying graces, and quicken the things in us that are ready to die. Let none through us take up an evil report of the way we travel or the Lord we serve. We have a liberal Master. Let our walk and progress manifest that we belong to Him, and our work and service be such as He will own.

XIII.

SETTING OUT, BUT STOPPING SHORT OF THE
PROMISED LAND.

“Terah died in Haran.”—GEN. xi. 32.

THE God of glory appeared to Abraham while he dwelt in Mesopotamia, and commanded him to quit that idolatrous country, and to go to a land He should tell him of, which should be given to his posterity for an inheritance. The command was one which tried the patriarch's faith and fortitude; but he believed God, and “went out, not knowing whither he went:” he persevered, and in due time came to the land of Canaan. Terah, the father of Abraham, accompanied him a part of the way, and even seems to have been active and cordial in promoting his removal, for we are told, “Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, Abram's wife; and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.” We are willing to believe that he was actuated by a principle of faith; certainly he was convinced that God had appeared to Abraham, and he acknowledged the authority of the command to quit the place of his birth. Yet Terah never entered Canaan; he “*came to Haran, and dwelt*

there." The expression intimates that he tarried there for some time. We know not whether the increasing infirmities of age hindered him from proceeding, or whether a secret regret at leaving his native country detained his steps; whether his faith and patience failed, or whether, without failure of these, God saw fit to take him to the heavenly Canaan, without allowing him to see the earthly: we pretend not to decide on the character of Terah, nor is it necessary we should: but so it was that he died in Haran; and after his death, Abraham, being again admonished of God, departed thence, and proceeded to Canaan.

The fact is simple, and needs no illustration; but it suggests a serious and affecting reflection—a reflection that will not appear unnatural if we recollect the analogy which the Scriptures teach us to trace betwixt the history of the Church under the Old Testament and the experience of the Church under the New: *How many are there who set out on the way to Canaan but never reach that land of promise*—who run well for a time, but are afterwards hindered! A melancholy case, yet, I fear, a common one! Canaan is employed in Scripture as a type of that "rest which remaineth to the people of God" under the gospel dispensation as their abiding inheritance—that promised possession which believers are called to enjoy. They are allowed a foretaste of their inheritance in this world, and attain the full enjoyment of it in the world to come. In the present life they obtain rest, in peace with God, in the exercise of the grace He ministers, and in a conscious sense of His approbation; and these first-fruits of the Spirit are the earnest of the rich everlasting harvest. Those only who enter by faith into the land of pro-

mise here shall be admitted into the Canaan above. But how many are there who seem to set out well, and even to make some progress, and yet die before they gain that happy reversion !

Taking this analogy as the foundation of our remarks, I would have you inquire—I. How far men may go in the way to Canaan, and yet die without reaching it? II. What are the obstacles that usually interrupt their progress? III. What is the state of those who stop short of the kingdom? May the Divine Teacher lead us to the knowledge both of His truth and of our own hearts, that He may “guide us in the right way to the city of habitation.”

I. We ask, How far men may go in the way to Canaan, and yet, like Terah, die in Haran? in other words, How far they may proceed in the ways of religion, yet fall short of the kingdom of grace and glory? In this inquiry we speak not of the openly profane and ungodly, who care for none of these things; nor yet of proud, disdainful Pharisees, who wrap themselves up in their own imagined righteousness, and treat the proposals of the gospel with contempt: but I have in my eye persons of more susceptible character; those who, having heard of the land of promise and its rich fruits and precious privileges, profess to obey the call to proceed thither—those, I say, who having heard of the blessings of the gospel, acknowledge the authority of the command to “come out and be separate,” and to “take up the cross and follow Christ.” My brethren, Christ presents Himself to you as “the Captain of salvation,” the Leader of the Lord’s host; He summons you to join Him in a great and arduous enter-

prise ; He calls on you to bid farewell to them of your own house, and to come without delay to His standard ; He requires you to take the pilgrim's staff and the soldier's sword and shield, and to go forth as those who "seek a city," and who are determined never to turn back nor desist till they obtain an everlasting inheritance. Many profess to obey the call ; but many, alas ! stop short, and dwell in Haran, and die there,—die before they have left the territory of the enemy, or crossed the line that divides it from the kingdom of Christ. The inquiry is important, how far we may go and yet be of their number ?

1. We may be visited with many *convictions*, and even with great *terrors*, and yet fall short of a state of grace. God has put within us a principle of *conscience*, which warns us what is duty and what is sin, and according as we observe its prescription, "accuses or else excuses us." This principle is much weakened in consequence of the general corruption introduced by the fall ; its discernment is dimmed, its sensibility is blunted ; but still it possesses considerable power, and it requires a very long course of sin to entirely silence its voice or suppress its warnings. Its power is often felt by the unconverted, and its reproaches and threatenings are sometimes intolerable. Cain felt the heavy burden of a guilty conscience when he cried out, under a sense of the wrath of God, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Judas felt its arrows, and the poison of them imbibtered his soul ; but his convictions led him not to penitence, but to despair. The preaching of the gospel seldom fails to awaken the slumbering powers of conscience. Of this we have a remarkable example in the case of Felix. Paul was a poor

despised prisoner, Felix a powerful Roman governor ; yet, when the apostle “reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.” I am persuaded there are few among us who are not sometimes conscious of similar feelings under a faithful application of the truths of the gospel. Nay, I am persuaded that many are ill at ease in their consciences through the whole course of a long life ; their convictions, notwithstanding all their endeavours to suppress them, are frequently rising to testify against them, and will not allow them to go on in peace in the ways of sin. Yet how often do all these convictions prove ineffectual ; so that, in spite of them, the mind closes its eyes, and the heart hardens itself in iniquity ! Are you, my friends, sensible in your own case of sins unrepented of and unre-nounced ? Does conscience admonish you that you have been neglecting your duty to your God and your Saviour,—your highest duties, your first interests, even the interests of your immortal souls ? Does the fear of futurity sometimes visit you, urging you to say, “What must I do ?” It *may be well*—it *shall* be well, if those alarms impel you to the Saviour. But rest not in convictions ; for if these be the whole extent of your experience, you are still in Haran, separated by a wide boundary from the land of promise, the spiritual Canaan : and if you die in your present state, you are excluded from the Canaan that is above.

2. We may be conscious of *tender religious emotions*—*sorrow, desire, joy*—and yet fall short of real grace. Not only may the conscience be convinced, but the heart may be in some measure softened, and yet remain unconverted ; for it is “deceitful above all things.” Such indeed is the nature

of the truths declared in the Scriptures, that, if they be in any measure credited and attended to, they cannot fail to awaken interest and emotion. Are not the *judgments* which a righteous God denounces against sin fitted to cause alarm and *sorrow* in those against whom they are directed,—if not sorrow for sin, yet sorrow for its consequences? This was their effect upon Ahab, king of Israel, of whom we are told that he “humbled himself, and wept before the Lord, and put on sackcloth, and went softly”—that very Ahab who had “sold himself to do wickedly.” After this example, need we wonder if the denunciations of Divine displeasure against sinners, under the clearer light of the gospel, sometimes touch the stony heart, and cause tears to flow from impenitent eyes? Nay, even the *mercies* of God sometimes affect the hearts of those who are far from truly yielding themselves to the influence of His grace. Saul was very tenderly affected with sorrow, when made acquainted with David’s kindness in sparing his life. He said, “Is this thy voice, my son David?” and “lifted up his voice and wept :” and yet in a very short time renewed his murderous designs against David, the man who *had spared* him. Thus when the love and sufferings of the Saviour are described in striking and moving terms, especially when the effect is promoted by a delusive presumption that we are special objects of His favour, the heart is often melted into tenderness, overcome by a momentary and deceitful sympathy, while it still remains in league with the world, and soon betrays its insincerity and treachery.

In like manner, are not the blessings unfolded in the gospel fitted to awaken *desire* in the soul? For who is there

that is so unconscious of sin, and of all impressions of religion, as not to feel some wish for secure pardon, for the favour of God, for the glories of heaven? Can you contemplate the blessedness of the righteous, without desiring a share in it? When you are made to feel in some degree the bitterness of sin,—when you taste of the vexations and disappointments of the world,—when sickness presses upon you, and death stares you in the face, are not some desires of better and abiding blessings almost necessarily awakened, some longings after a better portion than any thing you have yet attained? But “the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath not;” for it is a vague desire, that neither comes from the resolved purpose of the heart, nor decides the conduct: and soon, the immediate pressure being removed, some empty vanity has power to decoy you, and your better wishes are quenched and forgotten. Nay, my brethren, the deceits of the heart may proceed a step further: *joy*, arising apparently from a spiritual source, may be felt, while still you sojourn in Haran. This our Lord intimates in the parable of the sower; for “he that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.” Hastily claiming the blessings of the gospel as his own, he rejoices; but being destitute of humility and faith, he afterwards falls away. The Jews for a season were willing to rejoice in the light of the Baptist, and even Herod “heard him *gladly*.” But how deplorable—to triumph before the victory—to congratulate ourselves on the possession of heavenly blessings, while still the slaves of sin!

3. We may form many *good resolutions*, and yet be dwelling in Haran. Who is there that has not often formed these? In a season of conviction, in an hour of compunction, in a day of trial and adversity, we resolve to apply to the things that belong to our peace, to attend to the warnings of the word and providence of God, and to seek after that portion that is satisfying and abiding. But alas! the conviction wears off, the trial passes by, the danger is averted; and we forget all our purposes and resolutions. Or perhaps we set about fulfilling them, and adhere to them for a time; but trusting in our own strength, we are overcome and brought again under the power of the enemy. With what ready earnestness did the Israelites say, "All that the Lord commandeth us, we will do!" How peremptorily did they declare, "We *will* serve the Lord!" But "they kept not the covenant of God, they refused to walk in His law; and forgot His works, and the wonders that He had shewed them. When He slew them, then they sought Him; they returned and inquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer: nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant." We may look at another example of the inefficacy of good resolutions. See that amiable young man who came with dutiful reverence to Christ, and kneeled down and said, "Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" Had he not, think you, formed many good resolutions? But when Christ said, "Go, sell all that thou hast, and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," he "went away sor-

rowful." What avail an army of good resolutions, unaccompanied by prayer, and unsupported by grace, against the subtlety and power of the enemy of souls? "The way to hell," it has been emphatically said, "is paved with good resolutions."

4. We may actually enter on the work of reformation, and proceed a certain length in it, and yet fall short. It often happens that men, under the influence of natural conscience and of the warnings of the Word, renounce particular sins and address themselves to the performance of particular duties. Herod not only feared John, but "did many things." Thus are men often induced to abstain from particular transgressions, to exercise some degree of self-denial, to address themselves to various duties—things in themselves, no doubt, promising and right, but being done only from temporary impulse, or from selfish and slavish motives, consistent still with an unregenerate state, are usually as transient in their duration as defective in their principle. There are circumstances that indicate some approximation to the spiritual Canaan without affording any evidence of an actual arrival at it—as the evangelist tells us of a certain lawyer whose principles were so correct, and whose behaviour was so discreet, that Jesus said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God;" yet we know not whether he really entered it. There may be circumstances that even lead to a positively favourable conclusion, yet afterwards disappoint the hopes; for the Apostle Peter tells us of some who "had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and yet were again entangled therein and overcome," declaring that their "latter end was worse than the beginning."

These facts are affecting, and even alarming. You are ready to say, If all the attainments you have mentioned are ineffective, what is it that will avail? My brethren, nothing will avail without a change of heart—"a new heart" must be given us, "a new spirit" put within us. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." We must pass "from darkness into light, and from the kingdom of Satan to that of God's dear Son." Ur of the Chaldees must be quitted, Haran must be left, and Canaan entered. Not only a state of known sin and of thoughtless indifference, but a state of secret alienation from God must be renounced; not only open irreligion, but formal religion must be abandoned; in short, the soul must be given to Christ, and must be ready to part with all for Him. We must not only be convinced of sin, but converted to holiness—not only be sensible of some tender emotions of sorrow, desire, joy, but live in the habitual exercise of faith and patience—not only form resolutions, but seek grace to fulfil them—not only make occasional endeavours, but endure to the end. We must draw the sword and fling away the scabbard; we must love Christ above all, and serve Him above all. All this, we acknowledge, is too hard for human power, but it is easy for them that have Omnipotence for their helper. And all this is not only our duty but our happiness. In receiving Christ we embrace happiness; in surrendering ourselves to Him we secure true liberty. He hath said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" "Behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my ways unto you;" "My grace is sufficient; my strength is made perfect in weakness." Nothing will meet the case but

vital union with Christ, and an affectionate surrender of the heart to Him.

II. We proceed to ask, What are the obstacles that interrupt the progress of those who seem to set out in the way to Canaan? Here the analogy of a journey leads us to mention, first, *sloth*, spiritual sloth. For while in worldly concerns we are conscious of motives that arouse us from our slumbers, the fear of want impelling, the desire of gain animating, the hope of comfort and honour sustaining our exertions, in spiritual things a fatal torpor rests upon our faculties. We feel not our spiritual wants ; we have no discernment of the value and excellence of heavenly blessings ; and, therefore, will not undergo any labour or toil, or encounter any difficulty or danger to secure them. But how inconsistent is this with the character and duty of a *Christian*—a follower of the Lamb, who is required to “run his race with patience”—a “soldier of Jesus Christ,” who is called to “fight a good fight and war a good warfare !” Sloth prevents all exertion, or so enfeebles it as to render it fruitless, and it invites and favours every temptation. Like a paralysis extending over our whole frame, it completely unfits us for prosecuting our journey.

We mention, as a second obstacle, *the love of the world* ; a principle that entangles and enchains—that perverts the heart, and turns the feet out of the right path. The soul of man naturally seeks after happiness, and pursues it as essential to its well-being ; but ignorant, or rather contemptuous, of its true source, it allows itself to be deceived by empty vanities. This is its wretched folly, its heinous guilt.

"Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, saith the Lord; for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." The world is the grand rival with God for the human heart; but "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." How fatally has this principle arrested the progress of multitudes, and detained them in Haran, to their eternal ruin! How has it thrown a cloud even over some that appeared eminent in the Divine life, and were conspicuous in the Church, obscuring their evidences and greatly endangering their souls! "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

¹ In fine, the grand obstacle is, an *inward aversion to the ways of God, a dislike of serious religion*. There is often a struggle betwixt the convictions of the conscience and the inclinations of the heart. The conscience condemns sin, but the heart cleaves to it; the conscience prescribes duty, but the heart shrinks back. While this inbred enmity is unsubdued, it is impossible the soul should devote its faculties freely and affectionately to the things of God. We may take a few hasty steps, may make a few occasional convulsive efforts; but we shall assuredly be partial and fickle in our obedience, and will probably soon give up our exertions, and betake ourselves to more agreeable occupation.

III. We inquire, What is the *state and prospect* of those who stop short of the kingdom of God? Surely it may well awaken both sorrow and fear. Do you not lament the fate of a promising youth who, in the near prospect of succeeding to

a large estate, is cut off by the hand of death? Do you not mourn when any object, exceedingly desirable, seems just ready to be attained, and is then unexpectedly snatched from us and lost for ever? How deplorable! to have gone so far in the way to Canaan and yet to come short; to have approached so near the promised land, yet never to enter; to come to the gate of heaven, and to be cast down into hell!

Consider; those who stop short of the kingdom lose the benefit of all they have felt and done in the things of religion. In vain have been all their convictions, desires, resolutions, endeavours. Their sorrows have been useless, their wishes idle, their purposes fruitless, their toils unprofitable. The building they had undergone so much labour in rearing, is at once thrown down by the Almighty hand. Vain have been all the weary steps they have taken in a road, which, though pleasant in itself, has been unpleasant and irksome to them; vain the exercises to which their hearts were all the while averse, the offerings made with a grudge, the duties performed with reluctance.

Nay, further, all that they have felt and done in religion will really serve to aggravate their guilt and imbitter their disappointment. God has warned them by conviction, but they have hardened themselves against Him. The sin of broken vows, of treacherous infidelity, lies upon them. Their "goodness has been like the morning cloud and early dew, that pass away." May not God say, "Wherein have I wearied you? Were my paths indeed a restraint and a weariness? O ungrateful, if you had asked, would I not have given? If you had sought me, should you not have found me? But ye despised my counsel, and would none of

my reproof." What poignant recollections, what agonising views shall meet the insincere and unbelieving in a future world ! To behold Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, with all the faithful and true-hearted, in the kingdom of God, and themselves cast out ; to see that glorious city, the new Jerusalem, 'with all its bright inhabitants, and to think that they were once so near it,—yea, were regarded by themselves and others as belonging to it,—yet now to be finally and for ever excluded—how inexpressibly desolating !

Once more ; the conduct of such persons brings peculiar reproach upon religion. For they convey to others an injurious conception of it ; they represent it as a system of restraints, of difficulties, and of dangers, without adequate reward. They profess to have made trial of it, and to have found it a wilderness ; so that after having gone so far, they will proceed no further. Thus they offer peculiar dishonour to God, and do incalculable injury to others. "It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after having known it, to turn aside from the holy commandment."

And now, in concluding, I address, first, *those who have not yet set out on the way to Canaan*—I intend careless sinners, who continue to this day, without fear or concern, in the broad way that leads to destruction. I fear there are not a few of this description, who have never felt any serious conviction of sin, or inquired after the way of life. These are far indeed from the kingdom of heaven, being in the central regions of the enemy's kingdom. But are your hearts mere hearts of stone ? Shall no convictions pierce

them? Has God no claims upon you? Has Christ no right to your regard? Has eternity no demands on your attention? Even in *you* there is a conscience that will speak if you will give it a hearing, and if not here, yet assuredly *hereafter*. Be persuaded to avert its overwhelming reproaches, yea, the more overwhelming frown of *Him* who is greater than conscience, by now making peace with Him through Jesus Christ. "Agree with this adversary whilst thou art in the way with Him:" flee to Him while yet His arms are open to receive you; seek mercy while mercy may be found.

Many seem to think, or at least act as if they thought, that the mere *approach of death* is to change the man and make him fit for heaven. For they make no preparation for the event, and leave its consequences to be provided for by its occurrence. But no expectation can be more absurd. Death changes our circumstances, but not our *nature*. It alters not the judgment formed of us by the Omniscient. It alters not the character of our past life; it alters not the dispositions of the soul in reference to God and spiritual things. It is a messenger that summons us from one place to another; not a preceptor that moulds and fashions the character: it is a vehicle that conveys us to a new country, but sets us down the same men we were, though in a totally different locality. If you be not converted before, death will not convert you. In place of changing, it fixes and renders unalterable the character that existed before; for then that sentence takes effect, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." My counsel is, "To-day, while it is called to-day, no longer harden your hearts."

Secondly, I address those who have professedly set out on

the way to Canaan—I mean those who profess that they have given themselves to Christ, to be saved and to be governed by Him. Remember, my beloved friends, you must “endure to the end,” if you would be saved. If a man enter the army, and follow his regiment a few marches, and then desert to the enemy, is he not accounted a traitor and a rebel? Such will your character be, if, having professed to give yourselves to Christ, you forsake Him and return to the world. You must persevere in following Him even to the field of battle, and must “quit you like men.” And for this end it is necessary that you keep near to your Leader, that you trust in Him alone, and “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

A young friend of mine, awakened to a sense of the importance of eternity, resolved to keep all Christ’s commandments; and thinking that, if he had them ever before him, he might easily accomplish his purpose, he purchased two New Testaments, and cutting out all the verses that contained the sayings of Christ (which being sometimes found on both sides of the same leaf made two copies necessary), he pasted them upon the walls of his chamber, in order to refresh his memory by frequent daily inspection. But he soon found that he had undertaken a task he could not fulfil. His daily shortcomings and transgressions wrought in him a deep conviction of sin. At length, utterly despairing of his own efforts, he cast himself simply and wholly on the grace of his Saviour. He now found peace and enlargement of heart; his joy was such that he could not conceal it, and he was anxious, like a new and true convert, to communicate the blessing to all around him. Accordingly he assailed his friends and com-

panions, and invited them to embrace the gospel, not doubting he should prevail with them. But here again he was disappointed, and learned that for others as well as for himself, *the grace and teaching* that have power to turn the heart to God must come from above. Instructed by experience, he grew in knowledge and in grace. Though possessed of an ample fortune, he devoted himself and his all to the service of his Master in an arduous path; and after having for some years laboured as a missionary in a foreign land, he continues, I trust, to this day a zealous promoter of the gospel, honoured of those who know him and share in his beneficence. You likewise, my friends, if you would succeed in prosecuting your own salvation, or seeking that of others, must place your sole and entire dependence on the grace and power of Christ. If you do this, be not discouraged. You will find Him a meek and lowly teacher, who will bear with your infirmities and lead you on to victory. I will not conceal it, there are difficulties, obstacles, enemies in the way; but are you so cowardly as to be intimidated by these when you have such a Captain and Commander—so skilful, so powerful—even the Son of God Himself? We know the enthusiasm of soldiers for a general who has won many victories, and who promises them a share in his glory and in his spoils; and will you be behind, who follow the most glorious of leaders, with certainty of sharing the highest rewards? Make trial, I beseech you, of His power and grace, and He will “receive you and be a father to you,” and you shall be “more than conquerors through Him that hath loved you.”

Finally, I address those who have had some experience of the refreshments of the spiritual Canaan—I mean those who

Have found peace in Christ and are dwelling under His shadow. Even *you*, my brethren, it is necessary to remind, that though you have entered on the purchased possession and are occupying the goodly land, you are still exposed to the incursions of the enemy; for the Canaanite and the Perizzite are still within your borders. Yet be thankful. Let the mercy you have already experienced encourage you, let the faithfulness that has followed you inspire you with confidence. Let it be your study to “adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things,” and to commend the gospel to all within your reach. Endeavour to lead others along with you, saying, as Moses to Hobab, “Come with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” “Have your loins girt and your lights burning, like them that wait for their Lord, that when He cometh you may open to Him immediately.” “The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

XIV.

THE VISIT AND THE INVITATION.

“And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, *The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*”—JOHN xi. 28.

THE judgments of the Lord are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out. He loves His people with an everlasting love, yet often contends with them, as in anger, with severe and multiplied afflictions. He tenderly watches over them for good, yet often seems to abandon them to be the sport of their enemies. He pursues the most gracious designs with respect to them; but, for attaining these, employs means which seem to have a directly contrary tendency. Often He withholds those interpositions of providence, that appear indispensable for their protection and support; and, again, often surprises them with unexpected visits of love.

After Jesus had received a message from Martha and Mary, informing Him of the sickness of Lazarus, “He abode two days still in the same place where He was.” He seemed to forget His friend, and to abandon him to his fate. But His delay was intended to introduce a more illustrious display of the Divine glory, and more affecting manifestation of the Divine love, than if He had arrested the disease in any stage of its progress. After two days, Jesus proposed to His

disciples to return into Judea ; and they arrived at Bethany, when Lazarus had now been four days dead. Martha, being informed of His approach, went and met Him, and addressing Him, said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Jesus assured her that her brother should rise again ; and to establish her faith added, "I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this ?" Martha declared her conviction that He was the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. "And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Her secrecy in calling her sister, besides a desire for her of true communion with which a stranger intermeddled not, was dictated, it is probable, by her concern for the safety of Jesus, for the Jews had lately sought to kill Him ; and even of those who were with Mary, some, as we conjecture from their after conduct, were unfriendly to Him ; for "they went their ways to the Pharisees; and told them what things Jesus had done." But the tidings she brought to Mary were happy tidings. "*The Master is come :*" He whose coming we have so much longed for, is arrived at last : He will assuage our sorrows, He will bring comfort into our hearts : and He is not forgetful of thee ; "*He calleth for thee ;*" make haste to go forth and meet Him. Instantly Mary rose, and withdrawing from her guests, went to the place where Jesus was, and when she saw Him, she fell prostrate at His feet, expressing the same persuasion with her sister, that if Jesus had been present her brother would not have died. The compassionate Saviour

was touched with her grief ; when He “ saw her weeping, and the Jews weeping with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled : ” and as they led Him to the grave He wept. Then having addressed His Father with all the confidence of the only-begotten Son of God, he cried with a loud voice, “ *Lazarus, come forth.* And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, *Loose him, and let him go.* ” Thus gracious was our Lord’s purpose in calling for Mary—that she might witness the glorious power and wonderful mercy of her God ; thus rich was the reward prepared for her ready obedience to the call.

The words before us, though exceedingly simple, being uttered in haste by Martha to her sister, are full of energy and affection. They may be applied, with strict propriety, to all to whom the gospel is declared. I hesitate not to address them to all in this assembly. Yes, my friends, to every one of you I say, and I speak a truth the most important and interesting, “ *The Master is come, and calleth for thee.* ” Let these words fix your attention—lend them an obedient ear—let them make their way to a willing heart. Think of the majesty and condescension of Him who addresses them to you ; be persuaded to listen to His call—rise up, come out from the world, cast yourselves at His feet. So shall you, like Mary, have ample experience of His sympathy and love. Though your souls have hitherto been dead as the body of Lazarus, you shall have strength given you to come forth from the grave, and shall rejoice in newness of life. Only believe, and you shall see the glory of God. Let us, in dependence on the Divine blessing,

remark *the message contained in these words,—the persons to whom it is addressed,—and the seasons when we may consider it as peculiarly addressed to ourselves.*

I. In considering *the message* contained in these words, we first of all notice *the appellation here given to our Lord.* In the house of Martha and Mary he was continually styled "*Lord and Master.*" Though the glory of His character had as yet been but imperfectly revealed, these godly women knew Him to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and honoured Him accordingly. Though the rulers and the Pharisees despised and persecuted Him, these women were neither afraid nor ashamed to acknowledge Him as their Master, and to avow themselves His disciples and servants. They believed His word, and observed His commandments, and committed their souls to His government and care : and many were the tokens of peculiar regard which they received from their indulgent Lord.

Happy is that family, my friends, which acknowledges Jesus as its great Master ! happy that household of which the members, with common consent, put their trust in Christ, and devote themselves wholly to His service ! To *us* His glory has been more fully revealed than to these early disciples—shall we not apply the appellation to Him with profound veneration and joy ? In His Divine nature, He is "*God over all, blessed for ever.*" In His mediatorial character He is, as St Peter declared to Cornelius and his company, "*Lord of all ;*" for "*the Father hath committed all judgment to Him.*" He is "*the Governor among the nations ;*" determining the fate of kingdoms, the rise and fall

of empires, the issues of human counsels. And He is "*the King of Zion*," to whom it specially belongs to "build the temple of the Lord, and to bear the glory." "Moses," as St Paul remarks, "was faithful over the house of God *as a servant*, but Christ *as a Son over his own house*." "Ye call me *Lord and Master*," said He, "and ye say well, *for so I am*." All the children of God acknowledge Him as their Master—to prescribe their faith and regulate their actions, while graciously supplying all their wants. Every other authority they reject and count for nothing, when brought into competition with His. You know Him not, if you do not acknowledge Him as "*the Master*," the sole supreme Lord of your understanding, your affections, and of all you are and possess.

But what is the message relating to Him? "*The Master is come*." It was joyful news to Mary, assuring her that her Lord had arrived in person, at the burial-ground where Lazarus was laid. To *us* the words suggest still more interesting and important facts. The Master, the Son of God, the Prince of life, the Lord of all, has come in person to the dwellings of men. Behold, He came down from heaven and sojourned upon earth: He laid aside the robes of Divinity and "took on Him the form of a servant:" He descended from the regions of glory, and came to this valley of tears, this house of mourning, this region of darkness and of the shadow of death. The world in which we live may be justly compared to an immense *burial-ground*, a vast receptacle of the dead of every nation and of every age. How much more numerous are the dead that are buried in its soil than the living who walk upon its surface! But there is another view in which it may be considered as the abode of the dead—its

inhabitants, while unregenerate, are "*dead in trespasses and sins*:" their souls are separated from the Fountain of bliss, "being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them:" and while thus morally under bondage to sin, they are literally *sentenced to die*.

But, "behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, for to you a Saviour has been born, even Christ the Lord." He has come, according to the promises given of Him; and, by offering an effectual atoning sacrifice, and accomplishing a perfect obedience in their stead, has done all that God required for the redemption of sinners. Nor is this all—*He comes by His word to every individual* to whom the gospel is preached. In His word, and in the preaching of His gospel, He offers Himself to your view, and demands admission into your hearts. Look into the sacred history, and see "Jesus Christ evidently set forth, crucified before you;" "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" Contemplate Him in the majesty and beauty of His character. He is crowned with glory and honour; He is covered with a robe of righteousness; He holds in His hand a sceptre of mercy; His words are "full of grace and truth." He waits for your approach; He calls; He bends a listening ear. Not content with waiting, He urges, invites, encourages, earnestly renews His call, and grudges your delay. Many are the invitations He gives you in His word, enforced by the most affecting arguments; many are the proposals He sends you by His servants, while they address you publicly, and from house to house. Often He speaks in majesty. He tells you of that God who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders:" He declares that "without holi-

ness no man can see the Lord : ” He warns you of the fate of the impenitent, and of the fearful punishment of those that go on in their trespasses. Yet even His warnings and threatenings are the voice of mercy, intended to *reclaim*. The peculiar message of His gospel is, “*Come unto me and live.*” He calls thee, O sinner, to consider thy ways, to repent, to believe. He invites thee to trust in His care, and commit thyself to His government : He asks thy heart, with its confidence and its affection, as the sacrifice in which He delights. He offers Himself in all His glory as thy Saviour, thy Lord, thy never-changing Friend. Is it not in pity to thy soul that He calls thee ? Canst thou profit Him in any way, or add anything to His glory and felicity by thy services ? No ; the love is on His part—His desire is to raise thee, O stranger, from sin to holiness, from misery to happiness, from earth and hell to heaven.

II. The gracious nature of this message will further appear if we consider *the persons to whom it is addressed*. Now, as the apostles were commanded to “go to all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” so we address to *every creature* the message before us. *To all* we declare this interesting truth, that the Lord and Master of their souls, who has in His hand “the keys of death and of the unseen world,” is come : *to all* we declare that He “*calleth for them.*” “To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.” “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” The invitation is addressed to all who thirst for happiness, although they have hitherto been

seeking it in empty vanities, for it is added, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Similar is the invitation of Christ, "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*" But it may be useful to specify a few *classes of persons* addressed in the message before us:—

1. I mention those *who have hitherto kept at a distance from Christ, without ever seeking after Him*. How many are there who, instead of coming to Jesus, wish rather to avoid Him; who refuse conference with Him; who disdain to pray to Him, and who will by no means yield obedience to His commandments? They see no beauty in Him to attract their love, no grace to engage their confidence, no blessings to captivate their desires. Their hearts are given to far other objects—the world's various interests, the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. I address the unthinking, the unawakened, the worldly-minded, who, sitting at ease in our Zion as if they belonged to it, never look forward to futurity, or do so with stupid indifference. Will you not awake to consider the circumstances in which you stand? Do you not see that every thing you now possess will soon be taken from you; that your schemes of business and of pleasure must soon be ended; that your bodies, which you love to deck with gaudy apparel or pamper with sensual gratifications, will soon be laid in the grave, and that your souls, which you so shamefully neglect, must appear before God in judgment? "What will you do when God riseth up? and when He speaketh, what will you answer Him?" "*How can we hope to escape if we neglect so*

great salvation?" But are not those *neglecting* the great salvation who are at no pains to acquaint themselves with it? or who will not use the appointed means of securing it, or who do not prefer it to every thing that can come into competition with it? How shall they escape? Alas! escape is impossible, unless they can elude omniscience, or set omnipotence at defiance. You observe, it is not gross sin only that exposes to the condemnation of God, but the *neglect of the great salvation*. And hear me, my friends, this salvation is at this very moment offered you. "The Master is come, and calleth for *you*." His language is, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you." Though you have long neglected His invitations, He still repeats them. He is willing to pardon all your past negligence, and He assures you that, if you come, He will "in no wise cast you out."

You, also, I address, *who have not only neglected the Saviour, but have provoked and affronted Him to His face by gross and open sin*,—as by profane swearing, by lying, by Sabbath-breaking, by the violence of your passions, the virulence of your words, the injustice of your actions. Are not the words you have often uttered, the bad tempers you have indulged, the actions proceeding from them, plain proofs against you of presumptuous impiety, of the unsubdued depravity of the heart? "The wrath of God," I need not tell you, "is revealed against all unrighteousness." "Except ye repent, ye shall assuredly perish." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap:

he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." But, wonder, O heavens ! and be astonished, O earth ! the Saviour addresses even the chief of sinners, and calls on them to return and live. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?"

I address yet another class of persons who have never sought after Jesus,—those *who please themselves with the idea of their comparative innocence*, and satisfy themselves with a *cold, negative, heartless religion*. It is a dangerous delusion to take up with the form, never having experienced the power of godliness. A religious profession of this kind only lulls the conscience asleep. But behold, even now, "*the Master is come.*" Have you no thought, no desire, to know Him who claims to be acknowledged as the Master and Sovereign of your hearts ; and whom no inferior place, no secondary position will satisfy ? You cannot serve two masters. You must give Him your whole undivided heart, else your other services, however laborious, will profit you nothing. "Awake, thou that sleepest" in self-righteous security: arise from the tomb of thy formal profession, "and Christ shall give thee light."

2. I mention, as addressed in this message, those *who have sought after Christ and longed for His coming, but have not found Him*. This was literally Mary's situation when the words before us were brought to her ear. She and her sister had been exceedingly anxious to see Jesus: they had sent to a great distance for Him ; but they seemed to be forgotten by Him: their affliction proceeded to its last stage ; death seized the object of their solicitude, the grave had closed upon him, and all hope of his being restored to them was at an end.

In these circumstances, the words were addressed to Mary—
“The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” Is there any person present who has sought after Jesus to rescue his soul from death, but has been disappointed of his expected help? Is any one ready to say, “My hope is lost, my case is desperate, my wound is incurable. I have searched the Scriptures, but cannot understand them; I have prayed, but have received no answer to my prayer; I have struggled against temptation, but have been overcome by it; I am like a ‘tree twice dead, plucked up by the roots,’ and cast out of the vineyard. My life is extinct—my soul is lost beyond means of recovery.” My friends, I beseech you, beware of thus limiting “the Holy One of Israel.” Is “His ear heavy that it cannot hear, or His arm shortened that it cannot save?” Enlarge your conceptions of His divine generosity. Your adversary, the devil, who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking to destroy, cannot stand before your Champion, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Look to His atoning sacrifice, to His Almighty Spirit, to His infinite compassion: trust in Him with confidence, and flee to Him to save you: soon shall the doubts, and fears, and temptations, the cobwebs which your malignant enemy has woven around you, be swept away, and your soul shall escape from the snare of the fowler. Remember the animating exhortation, “Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.” Weigh the interrogation and appeal, addressed to you in the Word of Inspiration, “Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the

Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

3. I mention, as addressed in the message before us, those *who, after having been admitted to union and communion with Christ, are deprived of His sensible presence.* There are times, occurring almost universally in Christian experience, when even God's beloved children are deprived of those consolations with which they are usually sustained,—when debarred, as it seems to them, from the presence of their Father, and denied His smile, assailed with fears within and fightings without, they feel like men forsaken in the midst of overwhelming difficulties, and as walking in darkness without cheering or directing light. At such a time, it becomes them to inquire wherefore God contendeth with them. What idol in their heart has awakened His jealousy? What error in their conduct has called down His displeasure? Let them place themselves in the presence of Jesus: let them entreat Him to bestow upon them a look of *pity*, a look of *admonition*, a look of *reproof*; a look, in short, *like that which he cast on His unhappy disciple after his third denial of Him*—a look that may *smite on the stone in their hearts*, and *melt them in loving repentance*. "The Lord," we are told, "turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou

shalt deny me thrice ; and Peter went out, and wept bitterly." Yet, let the disciples still, in every situation, persevere in waiting on their Lord, and assuredly they will at length hear the joyful news, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Again He will present Himself before them—again admit them into His presence—according to His gracious promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee: in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

III. It may render the passage still more appropriate if we briefly notice *the seasons when we may consider it as peculiarly addressed to us*. Now, a *season of affliction* is of this kind. At such a time it was that Jesus called for Mary, to shew her the glory of God, and give her a signal evidence of His love. Are you in depressed and afflicted circumstances? Are you mourning the loss of dear relatives? Are you tried with pain, or discouraged by multiplied infirmities? It is the doing of the Lord. Affliction is God's messenger. It warns you of His sovereignty, and of your entire dependence. It reminds you of those sins that have exposed you to His stroke; it calls you to apply to that Saviour, who alone can effectually comfort and deliver you. It requires you to acknowledge the dominion of Christ, and to "flee for refuge to the hope set before you."

Again, a season *when the means of grace are fully enjoyed* is a season when the message may be considered as peculiarly addressed to us. Is the Word of God in your hands? Are your thoughts and attention summoned to it? Are its

truths pressed upon you more urgently than heretofore in the preaching of the gospel,—its invitations, warnings, promises? In these His instruments, does not Jesus present Himself to you as your rightful Master, claiming your attachment and obedience? Does He not call on you, as by name, to come to Him and live?

Again, a season *when the Spirit of God strives with your hearts by rebukes and smittings of conscience* is one that brings you a special message from Christ. My friends, are you conscious of sin by secret inward convictions? Have you felt that you have been neglecting the salvation of your souls, counteracting the purposes of God's providence, resisting the calls of Christ, and requiting ungratefully His proffered love? Have you seen something of the beauty of Jesus? Have you felt some desires after His grace, some secret motions stirring you up to seek, to love, and to serve Him? Oh! neglect not the call addressed by these gracious movements on your hearts. It is the Master, the Lord, speaking in tenderness and love. Seize the precious moment; catch the favouring gale, and spread forth all your powers and affections to the sacred breathings of His Spirit. Where is the person who has not often been his own accuser by conviction of conscience? But if convictions be suppressed, if the tender relentings of the soul be stifled and discarded, the heart may be abandoned to its obduracy and perverseness, shut up in impenitence and condemnation. Harken to that small still voice which speaks within you: be willing and obedient, hear and your soul shall live.

Having thus pointed out the gracious nature of the mes-

sage before us, and shewed that it is addressed to every one among us, and that there are circumstances in which it is peculiarly express and appropriate, I conclude with a few reflections.

1. *How much to be admired is Christ's condescension in His love!* If the subjects of a sovereign, equally distinguished by the excellence of his character, the lenity of his government, and the greatness of his power, should, in defiance of all obligations of duty and gratitude, take up arms against him, we should think of no other expedient to be employed by him but that of sending forth his armies to subjugate and destroy the rebels. But, behold, the rightful Sovereign of the universe, the Son of God, the Prince of the kings of the earth, instead of sending forth His armies, comes in person to His rebellious subjects—comes, not to destroy, but to save—calls on them to return to Him and live, to receive His richest blessings and rejoice for ever in His love. Think of the dignity of the only-begotten Son of God, and of your own meanness and degeneracy. Think of His incomprehensible sufferings—of His infinite gifts, and let your hearts be filled with amazement at that “love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”

2. *How great are your obligations to hearken to His call!* Can you make up your minds to reject it? Is He not your first *Master*, the true and rightful Sovereign of your allegiance? Or can you be so desperate? Is He not your *Judge*, the arbiter of your eternal destiny? What excuse will you be able to plead at the great day when He shall say, “Because I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye set at nought all my counsel, and would

none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity?" Anew will you be so *ungrateful*? It is love, it is compassion, that leads Him to call on you—that led Him to lay down His life for you. Oh, deny Him not His desired reward, deprive Him not of the joy of saving your souls. Come, each one of you, rise up, draw near, and come to His feet. It is my peculiar duty, as His minister, to convey to you His call. This duty I have endeavoured to perform. Behold, I have delivered my message: "I am pure from the blood of all men." To every one of you I say, "*The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*"

Lastly, *How natural, how becoming is it for every individual believer to communicate the gospel message to his fellows!* Martha went with joy to call Mary to Jesus. And should not parents invite their children, and children their parents; brothers their sisters, and sisters their brothers; should not every one invite his friend and his neighbour, and repeat the gracious message, "*The Master is come, and calleth for thee?*" Yes, every follower of the Lamb will be zealous to increase the number of His disciples. Use your discretion as to the manner. Do it publicly or secretly, by word or by pen,—do it authoritatively or beseechingly, —in every case do it *prayerfully* and *affectionately*; but let no one have it in his power to say that he did not come because he was not invited; and, if possible, let no one be suffered to resist the invitation or to come short of eternal life.

I have addressed you, my friends, on the subject of personal religion, still, of all subjects, the most important to each

of us : but *this place* and *this time* * bring recollections and emotions to mind, which it is not easy, and perhaps not desirable to repel. The *place* reminds me of the generous and effective zeal of that great Christian philanthropist to whom this building, with the schools and agencies connected with it, owes its origin ; the *time* recalls that sudden and overwhelming stroke that withdrew him from our eyes. This day twelve months we held him in the midst of us : on the morrow morning he was no longer within our reach. How deeply affecting, even to this hour, to have lost one so loved ! How bereaved and widowed even to this day the Church he left—which he had done so much to guide and to form ! How interesting and how touching the voice still addressed to us by all the good and great works that everywhere remind us of him, of which he was the originator and the soul ! His genius conceived what only his own great energy could carry into effect. The projects that to others seemed romantic and extravagant, were not so when he who designed them was there also to bring them into operation. He gave them reality and existence ; as our eyes see at this day, in this very place, and in the worshippers here assembled. He wrought with, or without instruments. He sailed, like our modern navigation, with, and against the tide. Not unfrequently, even well-meaning men stood in his way, wondering at his measures, till they were carried along by his force ; and at last, fired by his enthusiasm, they became his fellow-workers.

* Preached in the "*Chalmers' Territorial Church*," West Port, on May 28, 1848—the Sabbath corresponding with that in the night of which Dr Chalmers died in May 1847.

But I need not, and cannot, portray his endowments—so fully developed, so extensively known, so fruitful in results that spread their influence everywhere among us. Where is the child so ignorant, where is the individual so obscure and separate from others, as not to have heard of his name and his good deeds—as not in some degree to have shared and rejoiced in them? His plans were eminently public-spirited, philanthropic, and universal in their character. They were for every one's benefit; claiming the sympathy and concurrence of every benevolent and considerate mind. How full and communicative was his generous spirit! How much had he to impart! How gratified to be understood and appreciated! How reciprocative and overflowing with minds that embraced his views, and hearts that responded to his ardour! He carried the youth of our land with him, and bowed their hearts to him as the heart of one man. There was an immortality of youth in his own buoyant, elastic soul. He had not, even in age, chilled down to the temperature that the calculating world expects from those who have been for many years conversant in it. That spirit found no part in him. Well as he knew mankind, and powerful as were the portraits he drew of our despoiled and struggling humanity, it yet seemed to me, that it was the manifest energy of grace in his own character, and the genial glow of brotherhood that beamed in all his efforts for men, that gave the master-power to his soul-stirring appeals, the fascinating charm to his eloquence. These, as I remember them in the noonday of his strength, were extraordinary and electrifying. They left the impression of having been carried out of one's-self in a swell of elevated thought and splendid imagery, from which

the mind had to recover itself to get back to the consideration of the lesson taught, the truth set forth, through such magical plenitude of illustration. Yet the truth he taught was precious, broad and comprehensive as the character of the mind that presented it—meeting, as by conscious experience, the obstacles with which it had to contend in minds of philosophic temperament, and treating, with tender and willing encouragement, the aims and endeavours of those who were new to the way of grace. The *time* of his being called to the gospel, after he had assumed the office of the ministry, filled him, like Paul, with deep resentment of his former errors and increase of zeal for the truth lately discovered, and spread a striking influence over the whole of his after ministry. I cannot but remember the course of what seems now a rapid and brilliant career, filled in every part of it with remarkable and effective fruits in our own Church, and spreading, we may say, to the whole Church of Christendom. But I am not here to analyse or describe.

At this hour of the Sabbath-day, just a year ago, he was as we are now, with his friends in the house of God. We hoped to hear next day from his lips (in public and in private), what he had done, felt, and thought—to have mingled thoughts with him—to have his suggestions and his approval of our plans and doings. But—mysterious sovereignty of God ! when that time came he *was not*. The night left him with us, but the morning did not find him there. Not quenched—not gone out—not lost or bewildered, his precious soul, that was as one of us, had removed to another sphere ; was conversant with new affairs : Christ's disciple still, but absent from us and from the body, and present then with the

Lord. There was something so happy, so blessed, so honoured of God, as we cannot but think, *in the manner of his departure*, that for him we can find no room but to rejoice. Who that wished to crown his life with an end worthy of it—to find a moment for departure that should embalm him in every one's affection, that should bring back, as with a glance, the pictured memory of his distinguished life, set full before the eyes of all that knew him,—who that wished to see him honoured, wept, and cherished, as it falls to the lot of few, even of the wise and good, to be, could desire for him another sort of death, or another hour to die, than that which his Heavenly Father had chosen? Oh that we, as well as he, may get the benefit—that it may be not in anger to us, as it was in love to him, that he was at that time taken! We cry, “My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!” and feel bereaved without him. His work was beautifully wound up and finished. He felt it to be done, and said it was so. He waited and was ready. May the mantle of his spirit be found resting upon us—the love, the peace, the largeness of affection, the heart that seeks union with all, be they who they may, that truly love our Lord Jesus! May Christ be near, in all His life-giving, soul-renewing influences; and then we can bear all changes, losses, and bereavements—knowing that the delay for us is short—that we shall soon, like him, “put off this tabernacle,” and be again with him, and with all those “who through faith and patience inherit the promises!”

XV.

CHRIST THE HEAD, THE CHURCH HIS BODY.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.”—1 Cor. xii. 12.

THE appellation *Christ* is here applied, not to the person of our Lord, but to His Church, and certainly a more *honourable* appellation could not be given her. For she is not merely called *the Church of Christ*, as being the property of her Lord; the *Christian Church*, or *School*, or *Institute*, as being founded on the doctrine and authority of Christ; but the name *Christ* is given her, intimating that she is *identified* with her Saviour, *one* with Him, and inseparable in her interests, character, prospects, and very existence. The name of Christ is put upon her as if *His being* was bound up with hers. I recollect not in Scripture anything equivalent to this, except that remarkable expression of Jeremiah, “This is the name by which she,” that is, the Church, “shall be called, *The Lord our righteousness*,” suggesting the same *identity* that is implied in our text. In Christ is found the righteousness that justifies her, the quickening Spirit that animates, the strength that upholds, the title that secures her eternal inheritance. And this appellation, being given to the Church as a *body*, indicates the *harmony and union* of all its parts;

for the same principle pervading all, the same character impressed on all, communicates a *consistency* to the whole, and secures a *mutual adaptation* and *close connexion* of the several parts. There are two subjects presented to our consideration :—I. *The union of the members of the Church with Christ Himself.* II. *Their relation to one another.*

I. The union of believers with Christ is here represented as corresponding with that which subsists betwixt the head and the members of the body. And the comparison occurs in several other passages. Thus in Ephesians iv. 15, 16, believers are represented as “growing up into Him who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Again, in Colossians i. 18, “He is the head of the body, the Church.” It is not for nought that this analogy is so frequently and pointedly presented.

First, It reminds us of a truth as consolatory as important, namely, that our Lord is of *the same nature* with ourselves, even as the head is of the same nature, and composed of the same physical substances with the body: “For Christ took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, and was in all things made like unto His brethren,” sin only excepted. Without this community of *nature* His relation to the Church, as its *head*, would not have been complete; for to constitute Him head of them that are saved, it was necessary for Him to clothe Himself with their nature, to become “bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh,” that

He and His Church might form one body, and that thus the merit of His satisfaction and sufferings might be fitly, and as by a natural relationship, transferred to His people. That He *did* assume our nature, and that this was requisite, the Apostle proves in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and particularly in the second chapter, where he represents Jesus as "made lower than the angels," being invested with a nature inferior to the angelic, namely human and mortal, for the very purpose of *suffering death*, and declares that this was an arrangement which *it became* the Sovereign Ruler, "for whom and by whom are all things," to make, and which it behoved our substitute to submit to. Thus He was qualified to "taste death for every man," and thus He became "a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." This *oneness of nature* is the first most precious truth suggested by the appellation given Him as "head of His body, the Church."

But, *secondly*, This analogy suggests that He is the *presiding power* in the Church, ruling and governing it, as the head presides over the body. In our natural frame the head is placed above the other members, and this elevated position corresponds with its singular and eminent endowments. In the head are planted these invaluable powers, the grand *organs of sensation and perception*. *There* the *eyes* are stationed, which, like watchful sentinels, extend their observation far and near; *there* the *ears* are fixed, receiving the multiplied information conveyed by sound; *there* the organs of taste and smell are situate, discerning things that differ, choosing and refusing, and contributing eminently both to our safety and to our enjoyment. *There* also resides the

tongue, the interpreter of thought, the instrument of reasoning, the organ that conveys counsel and command, invitation and threatening. *There*, in short, is seen the human countenance, the seat of beauty, the index of the mind, giving to man an impress of dignity not found in any of the inferior animals. Moreover, to this portion of our frame, the head, belongs, according to the general sentiment of mankind, that *internal organisation*, by means of which we exert and exercise, not only the appetites and passions, but the high faculties of perception, reason, volition, reflection,—in short all the powers that peculiarly distinguish man and give him his rank in creation.

Now the superior attributes and endowments of this capital of the human frame, afford a fit emblem of the high honour and rightful supremacy of Him who is constituted our Spiritual Head; among whose Divine attributes are found the all-seeing *eye*,—the *ear* of universal intelligence that takes note of all things,—the spiritual sagacity, susceptible as the nervous system, formed for conveying impressions by *touch*, *taste*, and *smell*, of whatever is pleasant or offensive, wholesome or dangerous,—with the *voice* also that speaks or is silent, that consents or refuses, that decides and commands. For Christ is that Wonderful Counsellor “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” all light and intelligence, all order, beauty, and authority. He is the universal, presiding power, being “made Head over all things to the Church;” His seat is in the highest heavens, even on the throne of God, and the word that proceeds from His mouth governs and executes, with a Divine and resistless energy, all that it prescribes.

Third, The analogy suggests that our Lord Christ is the *vital principle*, the source of life and feeling to the whole body. For as, in the human frame, that part which comprehends the organs of external perception, and also, according to universal belief, those of thought and volition, exerts an informing and vivifying power over the whole man; so in the spiritual body, the Church, *Christ our Head*, in whom dwell all wisdom and all power, imparts and sustains the principles of the spiritual life, communicating to the Church, through all her members, whatever they possess of wisdom, sensibility, and enjoyment. It is He who, by His Spirit, imparts to the Church, collectively and as individuals, their several measures of knowledge, zeal, and love, with all their attainments in the things of salvation. In this view, His quickening influence is even more extensive than that of the head in the natural body; for whereas, in our physical frame, there are other parts beside the head that are conducive and essential to life, in the spiritual body "*all our springs*"* of life, and health, and activity are centred in the Redeemer. If the heart beat with emotions of contrite sorrow, or with lively gratitude to God, or the bosom glow with Christian compassion for our neighbour,—if the feet run in the path of duty, or the hand be stretched out in works of beneficence, we owe our ability and inclination for all this, both the *will* and the *power*, to the gracious communications of our adorable Head, in whom all fulness dwells, that "out of that fulness we may receive even grace for grace." As from the head of Aaron the high priest the holy oil descended to the skirts of his garments, so through Him of whom Aaron was the type, there descends

* Psalm lxxxvii. 7.

"an unction from the Holy One," that ministers grace to the lowliest follower in His train, so that all taught of Him know all things necessary for their salvation ; and as the separation of the body from the head would occasion the destruction of both, so were it possible that a separation should be made betwixt Christ and His Church, the Church would forthwith expire and perish, and the Redeemer Himself would be deprived of His high reward, yea, of His very office, character, and being, as Mediator betwixt God and man. The salvation of the Church being forfeited and lost, would not the Saviour's essential characteristic, name, and attributes sink with it into non-existence ? But Christ and His Church are co-existent and inseparable, and their union that which shall never be dissolved.

And, my brethren, as I intimated, what we have said of the Church is true of every genuine member of it. For, as the apostle elsewhere affirms, "the Head of every man," that is, of every believer, "is Christ." He is "made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." He is the source of life, the presiding power, the everlasting support of each. And this the believer is aware of more or less, from inward consciousness as well as from the testimony of Scripture. It is true that, as the new-born infant is for a time unconscious of the change that has taken place in its mode of existence, so the converted soul may for a time be doubtful of its real state ; but as the faculties of the infant quickly expand, and its powers soon become discernible to itself as well as to others, so the principle of spiritual life in the new-born soul fails not, in process of time, to demonstrate its *vitality* by its acts. Instructed by the

Word and Spirit of God, the soul feels its sinfulness and sees its danger, and its fears are subdued, and its hopes awakened, only by reliance on the sacrifice and merit of Jesus the Christ. The recent convert feels his spiritual weakness and innate depravity, and finds relief, consolation, and strength, only in the Lamb of God. Every day and hour he is reminded of his dependence, and obtains his daily and hourly supplies in his times of need. To the Omniscient eye are presented his weaknesses and wants; to the All-hearing ear his prayers are addressed; to the wisdom, energy, and sympathy, found ever in his Guide and Head, he has continual recourse,—nor is the hope disappointed that grace and love have inspired.

My brethren, I would put it to each of you, whether you know in experience this communion with the Church's Head? There is a *formal* religion, in which men go on from year to year, in movements regular as those of an automaton, but destitute of all the life and liberty that distinguish a living agent, with no throbbing pulse of holy desire or generous tide of devout affection. There is in their religion neither the activity of health, nor the depression of conscious disease; but the *sameness*, and withal the *coldness* of a motionless, breathless statue. There is a *philosophical* religion, consisting in lofty and sublime notions, but implying no impression or earnestness of heart, which approaches God without a Mediator, and would force its way to the tree of life, in spite of the intercepting cherubim and flaming sword, by a path which, since the fall, has been forbidden to sinful man. There is a *moral* religion, which professes to serve God by fulfilling our duties to man; but which, not adopting God's standard of duty, or feeling need of His help, passes by the

Saviour, and offers, like Cain, a presumptuous self-approving sacrifice, in entire ignorance of God's claims and of our position with respect to Him. If these be all your attainments, you are still strangers to Christ, "*not holding the Head.*"

Every faithful soul has the *name of Christ*, as it were, inscribed upon him, and the character of Christ impressed upon his active powers. His principles, sentiments, and opinions, are regulated by the *doctrine* of Christ; his temper and conduct by the *law* of Christ; and it is his high and earnest aim to be growing in conformity to his prescribed model, advancing more and more to a perfect resemblance. And what we have greatly to lament in those who bear the Christian name is, that they discover so little of this progress in the Divine life, of this zeal to grow up in all things into their Head, even Christ. I beseech you, my brethren, be serious in this matter, be earnest. "Know ye not that Jesus Christ is *in you*, except ye be *disapproved*?"

II. We must proceed to the other announced subject of consideration, namely, the relation of the members of the Church to *one another*. And here again the analogy presented in our text suggests a natural illustration of the subject: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one: *so also is Christ.*" The *variety* and yet *combination* of parts in the human frame, suggests to us the *variety* yet *connexion* and *oneness* observable in the Church of Christ. We may remark, in reference to the members of Christ's mystical body, the Church—their *harmony of purpose*, with *diversity* in respect of *office and operation*; their *dependence* on one another; their mutual

sympathy; and lastly, their *co-operation* in the production of the happiest effects.

First, The apostle reminds us that the members of the body are many, and intimates that they differ exceedingly in their offices and operations, for, says he, "the body is not one member, but many." The reflecting mind is filled with wonder in contemplating the vast multiplicity and variety of substances and arrangements found in the human body—this structure so marvellously and curiously wrought. And still our admiration grows with our knowledge of the form and use of its several parts—that in a machine so complex, each wheel and pulley, movement and circumvolution, should be so exactly fitted for its specific end. The appropriation of particular parts to special purposes is very evident in the higher organs of perception, as the eye and the ear—each of which, while admirably fitted for its own department, is wholly useless in the sphere, and impotent for the purposes appropriated to the other. The same distinction of office and operation is observable in all the other parts and members; and even where there is the greatest similarity, there is still a real difference. Of the many bones, for example, that enter into the hand or the foot, not one could change its place without injury to the limb to which it belongs. In like manner, every muscle and nerve, artery and vein, has its own place and office, which no other could supply.

So in the mystical body of Christ, there are many members, with each its own office. Of believers there is an innumerable multitude, each fashioned by the Divine hand for the place he is destined to occupy, and having his duties and labours assigned him; and though very different in importance, none

could be spared, and none exchanged. Their natural qualities, their acquired endowments, their gifts and graces, being various and diverse, point to different paths of duty and service. One Christian brother excels in the intelligence and quick discernment of *the eye*, another in the attention and discrimination of *the ear*: one has the activity and manifold adaptation of *the hand*, another the firmness and perseverance of *the foot*: one has the energy and nerve of *the arm*, another the tenderness and sensibility of *the bosom*. Some are distinguished by knowledge and zeal, others by humility and piety: some by the vigour of their faith, others more eminently by the meekness and gentleness of their temper. Some are placed in a more elevated, others in a lower situation: and while some are fitted to fill a large place in the public eye, others appear to advantage in the retirement of the family. Each has his place assigned him, and there is in his Saviour a provision of grace to enable him to fulfil its duties. Such is the observation of the apostle in the preceding verses, 4-11: "There are diversities of gifts, of administrations, of operations; but it is the same Spirit, the same grace that worketh all in all. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal: to one is given the word of wisdom; to another, prophecy; to another, gifts of healing: all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will."

But, *secondly*, This diversity, instead of superseding, *occasions* and *creates* a dependence of the several members upon one another. Because each member and organ has its own office and operation, therefore are they all mutually dependent; no one is sufficient for itself; each is intimately related

to its fellow, and finds its health and welfare associated with that of its neighbour. In the verses following the text the apostle shews that the inferior members are essential and component parts of the body as much as the superior ; each in its place is necessary: "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you ; nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." And as in the body the multitude of parts of various form, consistency, and character hinders not the *whole* from forming *one body* ; so in the Church, the diversity of character and the inequality of attainment does not prevent the unity of the Church nor dis sever the members of Christ, but, on the contrary, is the very means of their union and coherence. For the gifts and graces of the Spirit being so distributed that no one fully possesses them all, and each needs the help of others, it follows that the faithful, for their own preservation, are obliged to maintain union and correspondence, so that their various graces and endowments are, as it were, the ligaments and joints by which they are compacted into *one body*. Let no believer, however mean, admit the discouraging thought that he is excluded from the body of Christ ; let no believer, however eminent, presume that he is independent of his humble associate. To constitute a healthful *whole*, each member must maintain its place.

Thirdly, The analogy before us suggests the *mutual sympathy* that should subsist among believers. On this subject the language of the apostle we feel to be beautiful, as it is luminous and direct : "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members

rejoice with it." So intimate is their relation that the meanest or most distant member cannot be wounded without communicating a measure of anguish to every part, nor can the wound be healed without a universal feeling of relief and satisfaction. How can we find a better commentary or clearer illustration of the sympathy that unites believers with one another? The analogy suggests with what *tenderness* we should cherish our fellow-Christians, with what *zeal* we should render them all the services in our power. For in the corporeal system we see how the members are linked together in love, how deep the interest they take in the benefit and preservation of each other. The more noble disdain not the interests of the meaner, and the less refuse not to serve the greater; nothing happens to any part without interesting all the rest; their good and evil, pleasures and pains, are common. Thus should Christians feel and act toward one another, as being alike the body of Christ, each taking a lively interest in the comforts or distresses of his brother, "weeping with them that weep, rejoicing with them that rejoice;" communicating of such things as we have to the needy; omitting no means of comforting the afflicted, strengthening the weak, protecting the oppressed, and promoting union and good understanding among all.

This mutual affection and sympathy does not preclude, but enjoins the administering of admonition and reproof, or even sharp rebuke, when called for by the improper and sinful conduct of a brother, or of one who bears the name, as the hand may in certain circumstances be required to apply a painful remedy to a diseased member even of the same body; but to indulge in wrath, and strife, and revenge, is as *unna-*

tural, as *monstrous* among real Christians, as it would be for the members of the same body to wound and tear one another. To inflict injury and insult on your brother is as if the hand should wound the breast, or the foot trample on the fingers. You ought to have *one heart* and *one soul*, as you are *one body*. And above all, you ought to respect your Head, whom you wound and offend whenever you attack His members, in whose case He feels every injury done as inflicted on Himself. In persecuting them, you persecute Him ; you wound Him in a tender part, for He keeps them as the apple of His eye. If you love Christ, you must love them, and thus shew to all that you are His disciples.

Lastly, The mutual *co-operation* of the members of Christ gives rise to the happiest results. In the natural body, is it not by co-operation that every desirable object is attained? When the eye is quick to discern, and the hand is diligent to execute, and the foot is steady to pursue, when the ear is open to hear, and the tongue ready to return a right answer, then are our efforts attended with success ; the combined exertion of our powers secures ends which their separate and unconnected attempts could never have attained. In like manner the efforts of the several members of the body of Christ are then successful when they are honestly and affectionately combined. When the wise instruct the ignorant, and the strong help the weak,—when each individual contributes his portion of effort and of skill,—when the rich are “rich in good works,” and the poor are “poor in spirit” but “rich in faith,”—when the aged contribute of their experience, the young of their active exertion,—then the spiritual society thrives and grows ; “the whole body, by joints and bands

having nourishment ministered and knit together, maketh increase to the edifying of itself in love." And as a particular congregation is thus advanced, so is the Church universal. If we would strengthen the kingdom of Christ and multiply its subjects in our own land, *many* must combine, engaging the liberality and the exertions of many families, many congregations, and many denominations of Christians. If we would communicate the gospel to heathen lands, whether in wide-spread continents or in distant and scattered islands, *many* societies, principal and auxiliary, with their branches and offshoots, including men of various views as to Church government and ritual and discipline, and even men of many nations and languages, must combine and labour for the same end, and often in the same fields. If we would promote the conversion of the Jews, the *Christian world* in large and combined league must strive, wheresoever the descendants of Israel are found, to draw the wanderers to the gospel-standard, and to bring them, if not at once to the land of Palestine, yet to the sanctuary of Christ. Little success can be looked for without union and co-operation. Party ends must be abandoned and party names laid aside. "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another;" but "behold how good it is when such as be brethren dwell together in unity," and are fellow-labourers in the Lord's vineyard, "for there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore." The time, we know, hastens on when "our King," even the Son of the heavenly King, "shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth," when "all kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations shall serve Him,"

for "His name shall endure for ever, and men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed."*

My brethren, in tracing the analogy suggested in the text, I have endeavoured to present you with a view of the Church, first, in the *relation of individual believers to their common head*; secondly, in their *mutual relation to one another*. Would God that the picture were more fully realised in the experience of the whole Church; and more especially in this portion of the mystical body of Christ, the church assembling under this roof! Alas, in this, and in other societies, meeting to make their offerings to God, how is the *world* still intermingled with the true Church, the barren with the fruit-bearing branches, the members that have only an *apparent* adhesion with those that have a vital union with the Head! I trust I may say with the apostle, "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ." "My heart's desire and prayer" is, that each one of you may be a member of Christ, and that all, united in faith and affection, may be members one of another. And O that He with whom the blessing is, would rend the heavens, that He would come down, and would embrace all before Him in the comprehensive arms of His mercy, giving to each of us, in this house and within these walls, "a name and place among His sons and daughters."

Brethren and sisters, mutual help and combined effort are especially needful for giving success to the work of the ministry, since the word is unfruitful and profitless, till it falls in with *faith* in the mind of the hearer. There must be, with the message, a *receiving of it*—a hearing ear and

* Psalm lxxii. 8, 11, 17.

an understanding heart. I know there are praying souls in this congregation, that breathe after conformity to Christ; but they sit in contact with others who, in Scripture language, may be called "dry bones," bearing in the sight of God a very different character from "*the living* in Jerusalem." Now how is the vital principle to be communicated, and the heaven to be brought to operate through the mass? Only, we know, by the *Spirit and power* of God; but in communicating these, He is pleased to employ human instrumentality, making man the medium of good to man. And we want among us enlargement of heart, corresponding with the fulness and freeness of the grace of God. We want messengers and instructors, male and female, witnesses and examples, counsellors and helpers, "seeking not their own things," but the things of Christ; but above all, we want the outpouring of "the spirit of grace and supplication," the faith that expects and obtains, that receives and applies, that, enlarging its capacity, makes room for greater and larger communications. You, my friends, who are spiritual, having Christ in you as your life and hope, are deeply indebted to the Author of spiritual blessings; and you feel you are "not straitened in Him, but in your own bowels." We have only, I am persuaded, to be fervent and of one mind in making our application to the Lord, in order to His pouring out upon us a blessing so large, that there shall not be room to receive it.*

* Preached introductory to the service of setting apart elders in the congregation of St Mary's.

XVI.

MAN'S POSITION AND OFFICE IN REFERENCE
TO THE ANIMAL CREATION.PREACHED AT THE REQUEST OF MRS GIBSON, FOUNDESS OF
THE SOCIETY AGAINST CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."—GEN. i. 26.

THE brief, distinct, but very wonderful account conveyed in this chapter, comprises all the determinate knowledge we have, or can attain, of the origin of created things—of the formation of the world we live in, with its many tribes of inhabitants—and of ourselves, with our relation to God the Father of all, and to the creatures whom He hath placed around us. Questions which philosophy could not solve, respecting the eternity of matter, the possibility of anything coming into being where nothing similar to it before existed, the commencement of sentient beings, the derivation of the human soul, find their solution here. "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created." From hence, and in harmony with what is here made known, science fairly prosecutes her researches, and gratifying and

elevating to the intelligent nature of man are the discoveries given to his genius and assiduity while exploring the works of the Creator, that are sought out with high remuneration "by all who have pleasure in them."

It is not for us to know where, or to what extent, creative power had been in exercise previously to the existence of the system of which we form a part. We know not how that power is now exercised—we know not what has been achieved by it in other regions since this work of six days, or periods, of comparatively recent date, was accomplished—nor what may hereafter be brought into being when this "earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up," and "the heavens" we see "have departed as a scroll when it is rolled together," and all this frame of things "shall wax old," and be changed as a vesture that has lasted its season. Modern discoveries afford us a glimpse into what appears an infinity in the extent and progress of creation, and ~~not~~ doubtless they comprise but a part—a very small part—of the works of God; the real nature and extent of which baffle all our means of discovery, all our powers of comprehension. But though we cannot trace the operations of an Almighty hand beyond the bound with which He circumscribes our investigation, it is fit and becoming in us, for enlarging our impressions of His power and glory, to mark the wisdom by which He made the world, and to follow out, according to our ability, what He has placed within the reach of our inspection and research.

Amid the overpowering magnitude of creation we find a consolation and encouragement in observing the unity and close mutual adaptation that appear in the works of God.

We feel it a relief and refreshment in our researches into nature when we can fix on any general principle that seems to apply equally to the minute and to the immense in creation,—that regulates, for instance, alike the ordinary mechanical operations that human skill can direct and the movements of those immeasurable orbs that perform, with such unfailing exactness, the rotations assigned them. With the interior structure or destination of these distant parts of creation we look for no further intelligence in our present state, such knowledge not concerning us in our limited sphere; nor are we able, in any case, to carry our explanation of those general laws of nature that are most surely ascertained, farther than to the unvarying uniformity of the effects produced. But we feel grateful when the Divine Artificer discloses to us any rule of operation which we can understand or apply; when He seems to choose, from an infinity of resources, those that appear to us the easiest and most direct; when we can see the connecting link carried on from the more simple to the more complex of His operations;—in short, when we find the Almighty Author of all not disdaining to explain himself to the understanding He has given us, or slighting the adoring homage our minds are able to render Him from the little portion of His works that we can comprehend.

I propose, from the subject before us, to consider the order observed by God in the work of creation; the place assigned to man among His works; and the duties that devolve upon us in the station we occupy toward the inferior creatures.

I. We have an account of the *order of creation* in the

chapter before us ; and, "through faith" in the Divine record in reference to a period prior to the era of human testimony, "we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear," nor fashioned either from previously existing models or previously existing materials. God is, in a sense that applies to none but the Omnipotent, their *Creator* ; and, "having given the earth to the children of men," he informs us of the order of its creation, for our instruction and excitement to diligence in every good work. We are told of the dark chaotic mass, at first "without form, and void" of all production, brought, by the energy of the Divine Spirit into order and distinctness ; light being summoned into existence by the Almighty word, and shed over the surface of the floating globe, where animal and vegetable life were intended to have their abode ; while darkness fled before it, banished to the central caverns of the earth, or restricted to the limits assigned to its periodical dominion. We are informed of the separation between the solid and the liquid elements, adapted to the sustentation of different orders of beings ; and of the elevation of the lighter fluid, separate from that beneath, and held in the form of vapour, above the denser atmosphere below, designed to water the earth, to recruit its springs, and to temper the air—that important element that supplies animal respiration. We have here light before the eye was created that enjoys its use—air before any of the numerous living creatures to whose existence it is necessary.

"Known to God are all his works from the beginning."
Not improved by experience, nor rendered easier by repetition,

like ours, the first specimen in this frame of things being as perfect as its latest successor. The seed-bearing plant, the fruit-bearing tree, sprung up perfect of their several kinds, without progenitors of their tribes, but carrying in themselves the germs of endless generations. Day and night, the regular succession of the seasons, with the constant agitation of the ocean and of the aerial regions above, were provided for by the appointment of the sun and moon, and, as science teaches, by communicated motion regulated by their mutual influences one upon another.

How glorious a work of God is this world we inhabit, formed by a series of Almighty operations, perfect in all its parts, adapted in every region for the creatures that were to occupy it, provided by anticipation to supply all their wants, and arranged to answer all the circumstances of their various natures and conditions! How manifestly is the earth, with all its productions, designed for animal existence; and again, how peculiarly is this beautiful prolific fabric garnished with an infinity of skill, and peopled with innumerable inhabitants, fashioned for the contemplation and enjoyment of man! How much of Heaven's favour is expressed in the provision made for him; in the ingenious care, the thought, the contrivance, by which his welfare is promoted, his distinguished nature cherished, his powers called into action, his moral and intellectual capacities filled, expanded, and refreshed!

There is a dignity that attaches to *sentient being* among the works of God, and still more to *rational existence*—to anything that hath life or soul. The living creatures, after their habitation was perfected for them, were produced in the order of their dignity, those of simpler preceding those



of more complex organisation : first, the inhabitants of the waters and amphibious creatures ; then the tenants of the air ; and afterwards, rising in importance according to their relation to man, the quadrupeds—those that share with him the produce of the soil, or assist his labours in producing it, those that require his care, or exercise his vigilance, the servants and companions, and such as have subsequently become the foes and spoilers of the works of man. The earth is formed for all these as well as for him—each one of them has its appropriate sphere of existence—every insect, however minute, has its appointed home, its provision of domestic comforts ; whether secluded or aggregated in a colony, it finds, contiguous to its station, its necessary sustenance, and the protection and aliment requisite for its young. The earth's living creatures seem its natural proprietors through its habitations, within and without the sphere of human observation. We cannot soar with the eagle, nor dive through ocean's depths with the finny tribes—we cannot scale the cliffs with the wild goat, or make our habitation with the stork in the fir trees—we cannot mount to winter's highest seats, or trust ourselves upon its frost-built pinnacles. Nature stretches far away beyond our power of pursuit, and has secrets everywhere, that we cannot explore—myriads of viewless families, whose presence obstructs not our proceedings, whose welfare no way interferes with ours. These all existed previously to our race : God is their Author as He is ours. He retains, through all generations, His right to address us in this challenge ; “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ? declare it, if thou hast understanding.”

Our philosophy, even aided by the admirable optical inventions of later times, hardly penetrates below the shell of creation. The best fruit we gather from our search, is the knowledge of our ignorance, with an impression of the majesty of the wisdom that conceived, of the power that executed such an infinitude of operations. Inanimate nature has its peculiar honour in its adaptation to the support of animal life. Without living inhabitants, how unfurnished and desolate would be this beautiful structure, its fields clothed with verdure, its valleys covered over with corn! How profitless would appear the swelling mountain, the waving foliage, the sounding waves, without an eye to look upon them, or an ear to hear! The intelligence that should rest on them could find no answer to its ever unsatisfied question, "Wherefore all this?" Why even has nature its majestic solitude, its awful secrets, its undeveloped mysteries,—why do the Alps rise like pillars, as if made to support the clouds,—why does Niagara pour down, from age to age, its sea of cataracts, if not for the thoughts that follow them, the *mind* that, besides their other uses, finds a use for them in its contemplation? Noble as are all the works of God in creation, the living and intelligent creatures are what impart to them their real character, their highest finish and accomplishment. More exquisite in physical conformation than inanimate things, they derive from the gift of life, of voluntary action, of sensible enjoyment, a worth and dignity, to which nothing in inert matter has any affinity. *Life* is an effect that no created thing can produce, that no created thing can restore—an operation of Omnipotence, to which we at once assign the palm of superiority. People



the earth with its living creatures, and we immediately recognise a use for its various habitations, for its multiplicity of productions, for its many-flavoured fruits, its richly-coloured landscapes, for the drapery of its clouds, the pencilling of its flowers, the endless diversity and elegance of its vegetable forms.

Let us make the supposition that all were solitude, without a man to till the ground, and that a single stag were seen to break from the thicket and bound through the forest, no living thing besides being present with him—would not that living creature seem, without dispute, the forest's lord? Suppose the land desolate without animal existence, and a solitary lark were heard to raise its note soaring in the sky—would not that note sound at once as the voice of promise, and indicate a meaning in created things that they had not before? The castaway on an unknown shore looks round for signs of animal occupancy: the deserted nest, the scattered seeds, the leveret's light footprint, suggest the means of human subsistence. The companions of that hero among discoverers, who had set his heart on the yet unfound Western World, had their hopes revived in the last stage of their despondency, by the meadows of green marine vegetation that began to entwine round their ships, and by the hovering clouds of sea-fowl, whose home they inferred was not invariably on the deep. All beings are attracted by their kind—our loves, friendships, emulations, competitions, lie within the sphere of our own immediate species; but when a human being is reduced, by an unfortunate destiny, to a life of solitude, it is not the cave that shelters him, or the hill he climbs to explore the distant prospect, or the restless waters over which his eye roves

that attach his regard; but the bird he can tame to his hand, the animal he can domesticate to his use, the creatures warmed with life's blood that learn to interpret his signs and to turn at his call, that become endeared to him, and supply to his bosom the place of friend.

We have read of the dungeon's overwhelming dreariness, and of its finding a degree of alleviation, where everything else was wanting, in the society even of a spider or a mouse. There is a homogeneity, a harmony of nature among the creatures, a demand for sympathy which, when denied gratification from its appropriate object, seeks it in whatever comes nearest it, though immeasurably inferior. While using the creatures selfishly, we are too apt to forget our relation to them, through the common tie of the Divine care and goodness—a neglect which seasons of sorrow and privation sometimes teach us to correct. An affecting incident connected with this feeling, occurs in the travels of Park, the indefatigable explorer of Africa: A moment of extreme desolation occurred to him, in which the feeling of his isolated state, far from all civilised life, among the stupendous wilds of an unknown continent, was like to have overpowered his intrepid soul, when a small flower caught his eye, and suggested a reflection that called back his courage. God, he thought with himself, is at work here: He made that little flower, and cherishes it in the wilderness: I, too, am His care, though solitary, without friend or home!

II. Having thus traced the order observed by God in the work of creation, and noticed the connexion of its various parts, we proceed to remark *the place assigned to man among*

the works of God. The inanimate parts of nature, interwoven in a chain of mutual dependencies, find their use in the creatures that are formed to enjoy them; these again, have a reference to man, who alone in this lower world is endowed with understanding to know their various natures, and to hold the reins of a general administration among them. For God "brought all the creatures He had formed to Adam, to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." *They* were formed for man, but *man* more especially for God. In forming them, God, it has been remarked, used the word of power, "Let the earth bring forth the living creatures;" but for the creation of man, a word of consultation, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

What a solemn appeal is here addressed to man, respecting his character and office among the creatures of God! In what respect did he bear the image and likeness of God? It must have been in the attribute of mind and intelligence, and especially in the moral attribute of benevolence and affection, qualifying him for a father's place among the creatures, and a higher filial relation to his Father in heaven. How high his dignity, how eminent his station!—a new creation, differing probably from all that creative power had before exhibited, perfect in its kind, combining a material form and animal life sustained by the earth, with a Divine intelligence adapted for communion with God, and endowed with manifest supremacy among terrestrial beings. For these, if man were wanting, cannot give God the honour due to Him. Circumscribed each to its particular sphere, with instincts conversant only with the things that immediately concern themselves,

they cannot look abroad upon the works of God, study their design and mutual adaptation, and render Him the homage that belongs to Him as the Author of their being and of the system in which they bear a part. Man, therefore, stands among them as a head and representative appointed in the place of God, to receive such honour and obedience as they can render, and as a high priest to collect the tribute of nature's universal acknowledgment, and present it, a meet and acceptable offering, at the throne of Jehovah. God has not, since the beginning, withdrawn or greatly changed the charter of man's superiority. Though now a frail and dying creature, with him is still the reproofing conscience that bears witness to the obligations of duty; and if the inferior creatures find sometimes a tyrant where they should have a master, with him is deposited the written commandment that admonishes and corrects his error. The fear and the dread of him is still, by Divine appointment, upon the creatures of his dominion—their condition, as children of the earth, partakes of his—they are sharers in their degree in the calamities of the fall—and his relation to them, and conduct in that relation, form a part of the discipline by which man is exercised and proved in this probationary state.

Much also is given us to be learned from the inferior creatures in their different spheres of activity; for how much more faithful are they than we to all the right instincts which God has impressed on their nature! Whether their task be that of parental duty, or of efforts for the supply of their necessities, or of labour under the control of their human proprietors, how cheerfully and steadily is it always performed, with no murmur ever wasted on untoward circumstances or

hard exactions ! How do they enliven nature in the spring, and summon us to sympathetic thanksgiving, by the vivid burst of spontaneous song from the grove, by the joy of their frolic exercises in the field. What ingenious contrivance, what exquisite mechanical skill, what fertility in resources, have been remarked in some of their smaller tribes that least obtrude themselves on our observation ! A king has given us the admonition, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard ; consider her ways, and be wise : which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." And while we must impute what appears *moral beauty* in their procedure to the nature God has given them, since it attaches to them as species without individual distinctions, yet how do they instruct us in different virtues, by their untiring assiduity under the frustration of their efforts, by their ready acquiescence in disappointment, by the alacrity with which they conform to new circumstances, by the unretaliating mildness that softens to them, as it does to all who possess it, the edge of injury and hard treatment ? Free from the ambition, the disputings and contentings that agitate human bosoms, they give themselves wholly to the service of their Master on either side of the conflict—their task is still honourably discharged, according to the measure of their ability—their tranquillity remains unmolested, and their works are uninterrupted, when the land changes its rulers. The hardships of life are not aggravated to them by the pangs of remembrance, or of suspicion, or of fear for the future, nor is death embittered by remorse. Ever diligent in their assigned vocation, and found in the place which Providence allots to them, well would it be for

us were we as blameless and persevering in our sphere of duty, had we as little cause to be ashamed at any time by a sudden surprisal, and were as ready for the stroke that comes to fix our future fate.

But man's destiny, as lord of this lower world, prevails over theirs. They are forced to give place to him, to retire at his approach, and yield the earth to his possession, when his extending families demand room for their spreading habitations. The last proprietors of the soil, in all the fully-peopled portions of the globe, won it from an earlier race of human occupants—the first settlers often redeemed it from the beasts of the field. In reclaiming new territories, the shepherd and the husbandman are commonly preceded by the archer. Men, as they multiply, have the choice among animals, which races they will protect and increase, and which they will destroy. They exterminate wolves and foxes, to provide forage and security for their cattle and sheep. Those who, in ancient times, encountered the lion and the bear, in defence of their flocks and growing villages, were held benefactors of their tribes; while the hardy hunters who roused the enemy in his dark retreat, exploring the forest and the mountain to expel their dangerous inhabitants, gained themselves great renown. Nimrod, that “mighty hunter before the Lord,” who is conjectured to have been of a towering, ambitious spirit, did not doubtless earn his great name but by deeds of arduous valour and mighty achievement—not like the sportsmen of our days, who scatter the peaceful flocks and trample down the labours of the year, pursuing a solitary victim, whose fate is sealed before the contest begins, and who has been stored up,

perhaps from a former chase, to yield new amusement to his heartless tormentors. There was danger on *both sides* in those earlier conflicts—victory was not a matter predetermined betwixt leopards and wild boars and their gallant assailants. There was an object, too, in those labours—the wars of those times were betwixt animals of different species, and less betwixt man and man, there being little occasion to contend for territory, and exertions against beasts of prey being justifiable as a measure of self-protection.

The animals are essentially for our benefit. They hold the soil or relinquish it at our requirement. We are not to put their existence on a level with that of one of our own species. “Ye are of more value than many sparrows,” says our Saviour; and “how much is a man better than a sheep!” But the Scriptures give no countenance to that affected sentimental fondness, which is sometimes carried to a fantastic extent, towards favourites adopted from the inferior creatures. The animal creation is everywhere highly interesting; and some of the species have qualities that recommend them peculiarly as domestic inmates; and, even as companions of the solitary, they are more harmless than many human associates that might be found. But the passion that draws them out of their sphere, and lavishes an extravagant partiality on pets selected from among them, is indicative of ill-regulated affection, and is inconsistent with higher obligations.

III. We come to speak more directly of *the duties of man with respect to the creatures* around him. All delegated authority implies responsibility, and carries in it, between

the parties concerned, some idea of mutual obligation. The Supreme Ruler himself, whose law is the transcript of the perfection of His character, is pleased to guide Himself by the rule He prescribes to others, providing for the sustenance of His creatures during the time of their appointed service on earth, and even, after the just abridgment of their privileges in consequence of sin, engaging His word to them for the regular continuance of summer and winter, day and night, and such an arrangement of their terrestrial habitation as is necessary for the continuance of animal life. And throughout the Scriptures, His favour is made sure to fidelity in His children. His mild and equitable administration is the true model for all government, in which invariably different parties have their interests concerned, and where universally protection is due in exchange for obedience.

The animal world, in reference to us, may be divided into three classes—the *noxious*, the *useful*, and the *indifferent*. With regard to the first, we need no argument to convince us that *we* are to be preferred to the inferior creatures wherever our safety requires a sacrifice ; and all we would say on that head is, that all cruelty and unnecessary infliction of pain is highly odious and unseemly in the superior party, who divests his superior power of all true dignity, when he thus abuses it, and renders himself, in his turn, unworthy of that mercy which he requires to so much greater extent from the Lord of all. The animals are to be respected according to their nature—they are good in their place, though our weakness and liability to injury make us wish to know some of them only as curiosities from another zone. And we may

remark the goodness of God in the paucity of numbers and recluse disposition of those whose proximity to us we should most deprecate. There is a dignity, if we may say so, in the seclusion of those animals whom all the others naturally shun. God has bestowed on them great natural courage and muscular power, as their subsistence depends wholly on the exertion of these endowments. *Pity* would be a very inconvenient instinct in the bosom of a beast of prey; yet they show no love of carnage for its own sake, and satisfy themselves merely with the supply that nature demands. "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God." But night is their season for ravine—"The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens;" while "man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening;" and their seasons of activity keep them providentially asunder.

While dangerous animals withdraw, those that are more pleasing than necessary to us seem to affect our society, and to draw gratification from the vicinity of human habitations. The singing birds and ornamental insects abound most, not in the trackless forest, but in groves and gardens; as if the estimation they enjoyed there were a matter of interest with them, and human residences formed for them a court or a metropolis, whither they resort to enjoy with us the pleasures of social and cultivated life.

But it is not the dangerous portion of the animal tribes that require to be commended to our consideration, for they have the means of self-protection, and learn ere long to retreat within the bounds of separation we mark out for them; nor yet is it the harmless and amiable offspring of

creation, tenants of the wilds, and pensioners on the common bounty of Providence, who hardly make us sensible of their existence, that chiefly stand in need of an advocate. No ; it is rather those of superior endowments, that share in our labours and stand to us in the more useful relations, that require to be commended to our humanity and justice. As broils and discord do not take place among strangers and those who never come in contact, but among neighbours and brethren, so those among the animals that are most connected with us, and do us the most essential service, are unjustly the most exposed to suffer from our harshness and caprice. The very sagacity that is so serviceable to us in these animals often aggravates their hardships, causing unreasonable expectations to be formed, and motives assigned to them of which they are not capable, by persons of base dispositions and little elevated in understanding above themselves. Without sharing in our sins, they share with us in many of the temporal ill effects of the fall, in poverty and hardship, in excessive labour, cold, drought, and hunger ; and, without reciprocating, they suffer, from our bad temper, our violent resentment and vindictive rage. Bitter curses are often expended on ears that do not hear, cruel blows on those that never requite them. Like men in a state of slavery, they are liable to change their state when they change their master. The high-mettled courser who, in his vigorous days, was the pride of his youthful rider, becomes in his declining years, the drudge of the brutish and the sordid, who exact by blows the task that his strength refuses to perform, and expend in brutalising draughts the wages that should feed him. How is the ass, the most enduring of

animals, overloaded and overworked?—how is he made the slave of every tyrant, and surrendered, because he does not endanger his rider, to the most senseless and unpractised hands? He has no escape or redress in the ring of his little persecutors, who encourage each other in the arts of tormenting, and, without provocation from their victim, act as if no usage could be too bad for him. How often in the way to church, or from my vestry window, I am pained to see one of those unfortunate animals taken possession of by half a dozen of these vicious lads for their Sabbath amusement, who thus, besides the other hardships they inflict, deprive the poor animal of the rest and pasture to which his week of hard labour would so well entitle him.

I would enjoin on those who have the care of instructing youth in Sabbath schools and other places, that they do not overlook the branch of duty having reference to the brute creation. To inculcate a humane, considerate, and tender treatment of everything that hath life, is of great moment, especially in instructing the children of the poor, who are apt to be left too much to unsubdued nature in these matters. The care of animals is an important trust, above the cultivation of plants, and should never be committed to children, like their toys, simply for their gratification; though the charge of animals may furnish a useful exercise of benevolence, and may be given as a mark of confidence, accompanied with suitable directions, when children have attained the discretion necessary for it.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” This is a declaration and promise that carries its benign influence into every redeemed soul. God’s children must

needs be merciful, because their Father in heaven is merciful, and because they carry about with them a continual sense of pardoning grace received, of pardoning grace still required by them. My brethren, if you be followers of Christ and like-minded with Him, "put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind;" be "tender-hearted, forgiving one another." And let the blood that Mercy shed for you soften and subdue your hearts to the love of every duty, and teach you to regard your Christian brethren, your fellow-sinners, the world at large, and God's creatures of every name around you, as united to you by a sacred bond, and endeared to you by that love of which you first tasted the preciousness, and received the animating impulse in "the bowels and mercies of Jesus Christ."

XVII.

CHRIST'S ANTIDOTE FOR CAREFULNESS.

PREACHED FOR THE SOCIETY FOR THE SONS OF THE CLERGY
OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

"He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, *Nothing*."—LUKE xxii. 35.

THAT principle of forethought, which anticipates the future periods of life, is often accompanied with anxiety in respect to the events involved in them. While our ignorance of what is yet to come spares us many apprehensions, and reserves the cup of sorrow for the hour when we are to drink it, the uncertainty in which we are held, from our want of knowledge and control of all external things, joined with our conscious weakness, is apt to occasion feelings of disquietude.

The chief anxiety of a good man will have respect to the character of his soul in the sight of God, the performance of his duties, and the success that may attend his higher pursuits. Concerned to approve himself to the great Master, and to fulfil the purposes of Providence, he sometimes feels oppressed with the obligations that lie upon him. If the duties assigned him are various and important, involving the

interests of others as well as his own, especially if involving their spiritual and eternal interests, and if there are many obstacles and harassing temptations in his way, he views with apprehension the part he has to act, and dreads a failure where he is most solicitous for success.

We need not wonder if anxiety of this kind be often felt by the ministers of the gospel, and *that* in proportion to their intelligence and fidelity. When a minister takes a serious view of the duties of his office, and of the souls entrusted to him as "one that must give account," recollecting that success in his work conveys infinite and eternal blessedness to these souls, and that failure involves their everlasting loss—when, I say, he considers that he is either "a savour of life unto life to them that are saved, or a savour of death unto death to them that perish"—how can he forbear exclaiming, "*Who is sufficient for these things?*" More especially, if temptations multiply around his flock, if errors abound and sins prevail, he trembles lest he be found wanting in the wisdom and courage which his position demands.

But besides anxiety with respect to his duties, there are cares of another kind that are the inheritance of man. We are sensible of many wants, personal and domestic, which we cannot supply, and feel dependent on a co-operation in others which we cannot command. Perhaps we see around us not a few who have fallen from the sphere we occupy into all the depression of poverty and degradation. And thus, in addition to the pastor's concern for the spiritual interests of his flock, he may be depressed by foreboding fears for a rising family, whom he has no means of sheltering from the blasts of adversity, or of furnishing prospectively with such

advantages as might correspond with their position in early life.

But whatever be his cares or fears, the faithful follower of Christ may find enough to soothe and satisfy his mind in "the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of peace." For this gospel assures us that "God is love"—that "He has manifested His love in giving His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"—and that "whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." And in announcing this great fact, it indicates the all-satisfying inference, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?" Are we oppressed by the weight of our duties, or by the power of our spiritual foes? But, while warning us that we are "not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves," the Word of Promise assures us that "our sufficiency is of God." Are we concerned about the supply of our wants, or the support of our families? It teaches us to "cast all our cares upon Him that careth for us," and to rely on Him who says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." These promises may well sustain the disciples of the faithful Witness in all circumstances; and have often done so, when fulfilled in their own experience by extraordinary manifestations made in their behalf in the hour of trying exigency.

This was the encouragement which our Lord suggested to His disciples in the prospect of that "hour of darkness" that was coming upon them. He reminds them of what they had already known, while fulfilling their mission to the cities of Judea: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, *Nothing.*"

Their wants had all been supplied by the good Providence that ever accompanied them. Our Lord, however, subjoined an intimation that trials and dangers of a more penetrating kind now awaited them. "But now," said He, "he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one; for I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end." Yet when they said, "Behold, here are two swords," He answered, "*It is enough*," intending to check self-confidence, while conveying an impression of imminent danger and of the necessity of being prepared to meet it, as well as to intimate that carnal weapons were *not* the defence they required, else "two swords" would have been a poor preparation; and to compel them to look, *above and beyond* all human strength, to the tried care and effectual protection of Him who sent them forth.

And let us not fail to remark the wisdom and condescension of Christ in training the disciples, by gradual advancing steps, to contend with the increasing difficulties and trials appointed them. The *object* of their first mission to the cities of Judea was to proclaim the advent and approach of the Messiah, and to summon the people to receive Him; the *manner* in which they were sent forth was fitted to illustrate the nature of His kingdom, as being "*not of this world*," and to inure them to the exercise of faith and patience. They were sent "without purse, or scrip, or shoes," to teach them implicit dependence upon a sustaining Providence, and, rising above earthly cares, to give themselves wholly to the work their

Lord appointed them, committing *all* to Him. No doubt, the character of their mission was peculiar, its object special and limited, and the command to take nothing for their journey was given to assure them, and to make proof of their reliance on the unfailing care of their Heavenly Father. In every view, the history furnishes useful lessons for the instruction and encouragement of the ministers of the gospel. The *principles* by which faithful men, and especially faithful ministers, are actuated, continue ever the same, though their actual duties may be subject to various modifications. It is useful to look back to the apostles, as not only the *first*, but the *best* and most successful of the leaders of the flock and stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom. Let us then consider the words of the text and the facts to which they refer, I. As illustrating the *temper of mind* required in the ministers of the gospel; and, II. As affording them *encouragement* to trust in God for all necessary support in the discharge of their office. And in considering *their duties and encouragements*, it will be easy, my brethren, for you—the people of their charge—to infer *your own*; seeing *your* and *their* obligations and consolations are obviously *mutual* and *reciprocal*.

I. We consider the words of the text, and the facts they refer to, as illustrating the *temper of mind* required in the ministers of the gospel. The apostles, we see, when deputed to *preach the word* throughout Judea, were enjoined to take neither purse, nor scrip, nor two coats a-piece, but to go in unhesitating confidence in the efficacy of their mission, through the powers imparted to them. We consider these

injunctions as illustrating the spirit and temper of mind that become Christ's ministers, and, in particular, the duty of a sacred and thorough *devotion of themselves* to the work of the Lord, to the exclusion of *anxiety* or *eagerness* about the things of this life. They should be devoted, whole-hearted to their ministry; for why take no thought about things pertaining to this life, but that they may give themselves without distraction to their all-important work? For the powers of the human mind are too limited to have many things of uncongenial character equally pressing upon them, and must be concentrated in their aim, if we would secure any extensively useful result. A conviction of this fact has given rise to the division of labour, and the distinctions of profession. It is found that one object—if a great one, and requiring various instrumentality for its attainment—is enough to occupy human ability, and to fill up all that time which is not demanded by calls and obligations of a personal and private kind. The finest talents often become useless to society by being dissipated on a variety of pursuits, while far inferior powers, steadily applied to a valuable end, will secure happy results. And if this limitation and concentration of effort be advisable in any common profession, how much more is it demanded in that work which involves most intimately the glory of God and the eternal salvation of man!

But in devoting himself to his great work, a faithful minister is actuated, not merely by general views of expediency, but by principles of a more intimate and appropriate kind. As, *first*, by a deep-felt conviction of the *importance and excellence of that gospel* which is the subject of his ministry. This gospel he regards as *the word of the living God*, stamped

with clearest signatures of Divine authority, and commended by brightest manifestations of infinite love. He views it with holy *reverence*, and embraces it with ardent *gratitude*. His reason is satisfied by its evidences of a Divine origin; his understanding is enlightened by its discoveries; his heart is penetrated by its grace. It has proved itself "the power of God to his salvation." It has conveyed to his soul a sense of the rights and claims of the Author of his being, and of his own obligations, as a rational creature, to be devoted, heart and life, to the living God. It has carried to his conscience a sense of his personal guilt, and a conviction of the wretchedness of an unrenewed heart. It has guided him to that "one Mediator betwixt God and man," whose character and achievements it is his office to declare, and has given him to know "the grace of our Lord Jesus" in his personal experience. It has communicated to his soul the richest spiritual blessings—a "*peace with God* that passeth understanding," a "*faith* that overcomes the world," a "*love* that embraces even its enemies," a "*hope* that casts anchor within the veil." Its power reigns victorious in his soul; it lives in his heart, breathes in his words, and discovers its influence in his daily walk and conversation; it determines his sentiments, his feelings, his rules of judgment, and his habits of action. "Christ lives in him," and he is "an epistle of Christ." These are general features of character that distinguish all *believers*; and to be himself a *believer* and *faithful*, as the primary duty of all, is the first thing required in a minister of the faith.

This personal conviction and experimental knowledge of the gospel, lies at the foundation of *ministerial fidelity*.

This gives a minister *courage and zeal* in delivering his message. For if we be only half-persuaded of the truth of its doctrines, and very partially acquainted with their influence, we cannot be expected to propound them with confidence or earnestness. Some of them we shall be prone to overlook altogether, and others to place in a feeble or distorted light. Those only can be expected to preach with becoming zeal who speak as *witnesses* rather than *narrators*; who can say, with the apostles, "That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."

Again, this experimental knowledge of the gospel is necessary to impart to the preacher *skill in the application of its truths*. For the religion of Christ being an *art* more than a science—designed for practice rather than speculation, can be understood and taught only by those practically initiated in its rules. He who has studied surgery only in the closet is ill prepared to perform a difficult or dangerous operation; and not better prepared for his office is the minister who has only a speculative knowledge of theology. How can *he* apply himself with skill to arouse careless sinners, who has never felt in his own case the bitterness of sin? How can he allure others to the Saviour, who has never been drawn to Him for his own salvation? Where is the soul really awakened by the grace of God, to whom any but one himself "taught of God" can address a word in season?

In short, this experimental knowledge of the gospel is that which stamps *reality* on the work of the ministry. Without this the office is a *nonentity*, allowed, it may be, and upheld

of men, but disavowed of God—an undertaking which aims at nothing, and which, therefore, cannot be crowned with success. Is it not seen in experience that those who speak *from the heart* most readily find access to the heart, and that those who preach in *faith* are honoured as the instruments of awakening faith in others? If God sometimes make use of unconverted men for the conversion of others, it seems designed to shew His entire sovereignty, and that nothing is impossible with Him.

This, then, I have mentioned as the first principle that leads a minister to give himself wholly to his work,—his experimental knowledge of the gospel, and his ardent love of it. In the Word of God he discovers treasures of wisdom which he can never fully explore, sources of enjoyment he can never exhaust. No discoveries of science appear so precious in his eyes, no inventions of art so valuable. His heart is engaged in the study of the Word of Life, he “meditates upon it day and night.” And his conviction of the importance and excellence of the truth quickens his diligence in pursuing the various branches of learning that are subsidiary to his high vocation, in laying up those stores of knowledge which are necessary to prepare him to establish the truth, commend its excellence, and widely extend its influence.

As another principle stimulating his diligence, I mention, *secondly*, his anxious and affectionate concern for the souls committed to him. This is a remarkable feature in his character and of powerful operation. His flock a part of the human family, he views as moral and accountable beings, the destined heirs of immortal existence, and his heart yearns over them as depending on him, not only for daily spiritual

bread but for the higher quickening influence that wakens the first principle of life in the soul. The outside differences of wealth and poverty, of learned and ignorant, of refined and rude, sink into nothing before those great moral distinctions which determine the character of the soul and extend their effects to eternity.

Our feelings with respect to others must needs be greatly influenced by the views we entertain of the present state of man and of the demands of religion. If we consider human nature as innocent and pure, or regard the fall of man as involving only some slight and partial effects, depriving us of some advantages and exposing us to some temptations, but leaving principles of recovery in action, we can have but a feeble conviction of the necessity of a radical change of character, and little motive to urgency in pressing it upon the conscience. And if we suppose that the demands of religion are satisfied by propriety of outward conduct and freedom from open sin, we are spared any searching examination of the state of the inner man. He who has been "taught of God" has other views. Convinced of the universal corruption of man, of his alienation from the life approved of God, and tendency to wander further and further astray, he feels compelled to use the utmost earnestness of warning and entreaty to save souls. Persuaded that human nature is ever the same, he feels himself called to the same work with the apostles, namely, "To open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ." *

* Acts xxvi. 18.

He sees in his flock a variety of character, and he views all with watchful, tender interest. He cannot but "perceive," in the case of some, that they are still "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." It afflicts him to behold immortal beings perversely forgetting the Lord their Maker, and despising alike His authority and His grace. He anticipates with dismay the sad effects of continued alienation and final impenitence—a soul for ever separated from its God, banished from light and hope and joy, abandoned to increasing perverseness and despair. With respect to such he has "continual sorrow and heaviness of heart." What arguments shall he use to awaken and alarm them? "Knowing the terrors of the Lord," he labours to "persuade them," and if they will not hear, he "weeps in secret places" over the hardness of their hearts. Thus did our Lord weep over Jerusalem, saying, "O that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace." Thus did Paul tell the believers, "even weeping," of "those who were enemies of the cross of Christ." Surely there is no such cause for sorrow as in the case of obstinate, obdurate sinners.

There are others with respect to whom his feelings are of a mixed kind, involving alternations of hope and fear. He discovers some indications of sensibility in spiritual things—of conviction, of desire, of good resolution. The first appearances of grace and piety are pleasing to his eye, but he is aware that convictions often visit the heart without leaving abiding fruits; nor is he so ignorant of human nature as to be satisfied with amiable feelings or correctness of deportment. He remembers the case of the young man of whom it is said, that "Jesus, beholding him, loved him," and yet testified, "One

thing thou lackest." It is affecting to think that in many whom we cannot but love there is a lamentable deficiency, because the heart is divided and not given wholly to God. The faithful minister labours to fix the salutary conviction—to encourage the rightly directed desire—to decide the purpose of the inquiring soul, and to seal its union with the Saviour. He would "gladly spend and be spent," to bring souls to Christ. He "travails in birth till Christ be formed in them." He can say, "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

Again, there are those whom he contemplates with refreshing feelings of esteem and affection, giving thanks to God on every remembrance of them—those who receive the truth in the love of it, and who walk in the truth. These are his "joy and crown." "Being affectionately desirous of them, he is willing to impart, not the gospel of God only, but even his own life." He "exhorts and comforts and charges every one of them, as a father doth his children, that they walk worthy of God, who hath called them to His kingdom and glory." Compared with the high object of saving souls, his personal interest and reputation are of trifling account. The applause of the multitude, and the admiration of the polite, are equally insignificant—most willingly would he forego what comes to him of that, I do not say, to save a soul, but to make one good abiding impression on the conscience of a sinner.

I might mention other principles, which lead the minister of Christ to give himself to his work ; among which the chief is, zeal for that by which God is most glorified, and his animating expectation of the *future blessedness* promised the

Church and the world, in the universal establishment and supremacy of the reign of Christ. He attaches himself to what he knows to be a rising and finally triumphing cause. But waving these considerations, I hasten to another observation with respect to the *temper of mind* required in ministers; namely, that they relinquish *anxiety and eagerness* as to the things of the world. "Take nothing for your journey," said our Lord to the disciples; "provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass." Though the precept was given in peculiar circumstances, specially calling for it, yet the *spirit* it prescribes is ever indispensable. Anxiety and eagerness about worldly things must still be guarded against by the minister of Christ, as counteracting the higher principles of his life, and incompatible with the demands of his office.

If we call to mind his many important duties; if we consider the time that must be spent in "reading, meditation, and prayer,"—in investigating the truth, and fortifying his own soul in the faith,—in seeking out and setting in order thoughts to penetrate the heart, and words to fix themselves in the memory,—in searching out arguments, reproofs, exhortations, for convincing the erring, arousing the careless, and stimulating the slothful,—in providing advice and consolation to encourage the dejected and edify the upright; if we take a view of the other duties of his office—of private instruction and admonition, of visiting the sick, comforting the mourner, directing those in perplexity, and warning those who go astray; we cannot but perceive that any stated secular occupation would be adverse to the faithful and successful discharge of his office.

God has accordingly set apart an order of men to be devoted to the Christian ministry. His command is, "He that ministereth, let him wait upon his ministry." A minister is not only a soldier of Christ, but holds rank in the army of the faithful ; and to him especially the admonition is given, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."* The Church has ever expected of its ministers a separation from the *business*, as well as a renunciation of the *spirit* of the world.

He who embraces the work of the ministry, renounces the *ambition* of the world. His profession excludes him from those situations of honour and emolument to which others may aspire. His circumstances of birth and station may have opened to him a fair field of advancement in other professions ; but these advantages he resigns. His talents may be such as might ensure success in the contest for worldly greatness ; but he employs them in services which, however noble in the eye of God, are lightly accounted of among men. There may indeed be those to whom the situation of a humble working clergyman may be an object of secular ambition ; but every man to whom the world unfolds its paths to opulence and distinction, feels that in choosing this profession he makes a self-denying choice as to the world, and relinquishes all hope of *treasure* except the treasure laid up in heaven ; all hope of *honour* except the honour that comes from God, or that is found in the esteem and affection which may attend the faithful discharge of his duty.

Again, he renounces the *pleasures* of the world. A sloth-

* 2 Tim. ii. 4.

ful and luxurious life is in direct opposition to his duties. He must be "temperate in all things;" must "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;" must be armed against the arrows of derision and contempt that are aimed at the followers of the cross.

Once more, he must guard against the *cares* of the world. We know the frailty of nature—how insinuating the love of the world is, and how encroaching its anxieties, as if consolation were obtained by mourning, or succour by complaint. But these cares he must cast upon God, nor suffer them to interrupt his loftier aims. Is it not for your sakes that he makes these sacrifices? Is it not for your interest that he be set free from every weight that would hang on the wings of his exertions, in order that he may make "full proof of his ministry," and, as far as God gives it to him, may secure the salvation of your souls?

II. But it is time that we proceed to consider the text as affording ministers *encouragement to trust in God* for all needful support in their high vocation. Nor can I do more than offer a few brief observations on this part of our subject.

The first anxiety of a faithful minister is, that he may enjoy *the countenance and support* of Him who gives him his commission. If this be granted, all must be well. And here his sources of encouragement and confidence are those that supported the apostles. "Behold," said our Lord to His disciples, "*I send you forth*;" and again, "*Go, preach the gospel to every creature.*" The commission they thus received from their Divine Master was the *foundation* of

their office, and the *rock* of their support; and a persuasion that this commission embraces *himself* is necessary to enable a minister to look with confidence to God for strength. And here I must remark, how important it is for one set apart to the sacred office to have satisfying evidence that his *call* to it is from the Lord. Without this he is ill prepared, either to fulfil the duties or to encounter the difficulties and toils of his position. A persuasion that the Head and King of the Church sends him as His ambassador to men, and a corresponding conviction that he is animated by pure motives—zeal for the glory of God, love to his Saviour, and concern for the salvation of souls—will support and invigorate him amid many discouragements. This will enable him to realise the comfort conveyed in the promise, “Lo, I am with you alway,” making him “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” Enjoying the presence of the Lord, he fails not entirely of consolation, though he seem to spend his strength in vain and his labour for nought. But how ample the recompense, how abundant the reward, when God honours him as the instrument of opening men’s eyes, and transferring them from the kingdom of Satan into that of His own dear Son! When thus answered in his most fervent prayers, and gratified in the prime wish of his heart, will not the servant of Christ exclaim with the apostle, “*I have all and abound?*” or, if addressed in the question proposed to the disciples, “*Lacked ye any thing?*” will he not, with joyful gratitude reply, “*Nothing?*”

The words of our text are not less fitted to encourage the faithful labourers in the gospel vineyard to trust in their Lord for the supply of their temporal wants. A watchful

Providence guided and guarded the disciples on their errand of mercy, provided a kind reception for them wherever they came, with every desirable act of friendship ; and this Providence still watches over their successors in the work of the ministry, extending its care to all their circumstances and all their feelings. Their heavenly "Father knows what things they have need of," and He has said, "*All things are yours,*" and "*All things shall work together,*" in separate or combined operation, "*for your good.*"

The faithful labourer, while "seeking not his own profit, but that of many, that they may be saved," will find that his honoured Master does not forget him. While exposed to many dangers, "his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks ;" while subjected to many wants, his "bread is given him, his water made sure." In proof of the watchful providence of the Lord of all, may we not appeal to the history of those who have given themselves to propagate the gospel in heathen lands and inhospitable climes? For how often have they had their *lives* preserved in circumstances the most perilous—their *wants* supplied by unlooked-for means—their *sorrows* assuaged—their *fears* relieved—and, finally, though heavy their trials, have had their labours crowned with the inestimable reward of "*turning many to righteousness,*" with the promise in reversion of "*shining as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever?*" The solitary wanderer in the wilderness, visited, like Jacob, with heavenly visions, has been made to say, "Surely the Lord is in this place : this is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven." The afflicted parent looking for the death of a beloved son, has seen his life rescued and restored, and, with

Hagar, has exultingly said, "*Thou God seest me.*" The tried witness and confessor, persecuted by foes and forsaken by friends, having none to stand by him, has heard the voice of the Saviour, saying, "Fear not, I am with thee." In more ordinary circumstances, and in the whole course of life, the good householder feeds his servants "with food convenient for them;" and he fails not to extend his care to their offspring, not allowing the children to *suffer loss* in consequence of the generous, self-sacrificing zeal of their fathers. Often has the kindness of Providence been remarked in reference to the *orphan families* of faithful ministers; to whom may well be applied the words of Psalm cxv. 12-14: "The Lord will bless the *house of Israel*; the Lord will bless the *house of Aaron*; the Lord will bless *all that fear Him*, both small and great; the Lord shall increase you more and more, *you and your children.*"

But I ask, *What are*, and *whence come*, the means which the Lord of all employs to fulfil His gracious intention of supplying all the wants of His servants? Where are they found? Are they not found in the *love* and *gratitude* and *just beneficence* of those who receive the gifts of the grace of God? This is the order of Providence, and the arrangement of Divine wisdom, equity, and goodness. It is not the intention of the Father of all that those appointed to feed the flock should *monopolise* all the faith, disinterestedness, and generosity which the gospel inspires. No certainly; there must be a *diffusion* and *reciprocation* of the graces of the Spirit and their happy fruits; and unless the gospel fail of its effects, and no longer produce that preference of *spiritual* to *carnal* things which it was wont to do, the claims of the

ministers of the sanctuary cannot but be felt by those who wait on their ministry. God has engaged that they shall *lack nothing*, and He seems to intrust His honour to the members of His Church, by leaving it to them to fulfil His engagement to their teachers. Knowing that *love to Christ* is ever linked with *love to His ministers*, He provides for the support of the latter in the *sympathy, liberality*, and I add, *justice* of those who love that Divine Master from whom their commission proceeds. While with the apostle we say, "Necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me, if I preach not the gospel;" while, "willing to spend and be spent," we "seek not *yours but you*," does not the holy and generous flame extend itself to your bosoms, and lead you to think little of such earthly things as you can give in return for heavenly blessings? "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your carnal things?" Our blessed Lord, in abandoning Himself to His high vocation, gratified the feelings of those women who ministered to Him of their substance by freely accepting their kindness; and St Paul, though he declined the offered gifts of the Church of Corinth, strenuously insisted on his *right*, and that of his fellows, to a competent and liberal support.

But I need not press such arguments upon you. You feel grateful for that appointment of the great Head of the Church which, while it makes it the duty of him that "is taught in the word to communicate to him that teacheth in all good things," condescends to accept these expressions of your kindness to His ministering servants. You feel your personal obligations, and ask, "*What shall we do?*" I answer, It is not for ourselves we desire a gift; but there is an

object in reference to which we think it no degradation to appeal to your liberality, no arrogance to claim your assistance. That object is brought before you by the society in whose name I this day address you, "*The Society for the Sons of the Clergy.*" From the families of the ministers of the Church is continually proceeding a train of unportioned daughters and unpatrimonied sons, whose virtues and talents are their only inheritance, and who, if deprived of their natural guardians, cannot command the means of obtaining that education which is necessary to call forth their powers, and prepare them for situations of usefulness. Interesting as they are in themselves, they surely, for their fathers' sakes, have claims upon your kindness which your hearts are ready to admit. There are few pleas more engaging or more urgent than those of the bereaved families of the men "who have had rule over you, and have spoken to you the word of life;" few means of doing good more inviting than the helping forward education that has been well begun, and perfecting work on which the Divine blessing has been often invoked. If as the members of the pastor's family approached the time when they must leave the parental roof to engage in academic studies or commercial pursuits, it was the lot of him who had hitherto watched over them to feel the *encroachments of disease* or *premonitions of dissolution*, apprehensions for their after fate can scarcely have been excluded even from the sanctuary of a believing heart. And if he were summoned from this mortal scene before having been able, even by his utmost efforts, to realise his wishes of a competent provision, or so much as the first stage of progress, for those who survive, how sadly are the

sorrows of *widowed affliction* aggravated, and the struggles multiplied that await *orphans* torn from the habitation they have been used to call *their own*, and thrown, it may be, on the help of strangers in the wide inhospitable world! But in the case of every faithful servant of the Lord, the voice is heard from heaven, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them, and let thy widow trust in me." And in such circumstances is it not becoming and honourable for the members of the flock and of the fold to come, as it were, "to the help of the Lord," and by united effort, to realise His promise, and shew that you will by no means "see the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread?" I close with the encouraging declaration of the *anointed King* at the great day of judgment, "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*" "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!"

XVIII.

THE COUNTRY'S BANE.

PREACHED ON THE LAST SABBATH OF THE YEAR.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; but be filled with the Spirit."

—Eph. v. 18.

THE goodness of the great Creator is conspicuous, throughout the whole extent of the animal creation, in uniting with the gift of life the capacity of enjoyment ; and in furnishing, in the munificence of nature, much to gratify this capacity. In the ample storehouse of Providence we find not only such things as are necessary to subsistence, but such as are conducive to pleasure ; and as there is not any living creature, however insignificant it may seem, that is not endued with the susceptibility of pleasing sensations or impressions, so there is not any for which the great Author of life has not provided enjoyments suited to its condition and circumstances.

But the liberality of our Divine Benefactor is particularly conspicuous in reference to man, whose nobler powers are accompanied with abilities above those of other animals for deriving pleasure even from those sources of enjoyment that are of an external and physical kind. Who can look with an observant eye on the arrangements of the natural world

without recognising the regard creating Wisdom has shown, not only to the supply of man's necessities, but to the gratification of his various faculties? Might not the all-wise Creator have furnished the *light* necessary for the purposes of mere existence and needful occupation, without gratifying the eye with the glories of the solar sky or the luminaries of night, and with all the variety of colour that paints the landscape, and all the lavish expenditure of beauty discernible in the vegetable and animal world, and in the human form and countenance? Might He not have provided the means of communicating *sound*, so as to convey all such intimations as are necessary to safety and utility, without regaling the ear with the charms of harmony, whether furnished by the minstrels of nature or by the voice and skill of man? Might He not have supplied us with food, and imposed the necessity of using it, without conjoining with it the gratification of the taste and appetite? Might He not have secured from parents the attention necessary for the rearing of their offspring, without soothing their cares and rewarding their pains by the precious feelings associated with the relation and with the multiplied delights of reciprocal affection? In some of the gratifications thus furnished by the bounty of Providence, the inferior animals participate, but their share in them is low and limited. Man derives from them a far more varied and refined enjoyment in the exercise of those powers of thought and reflection that invest the objects before him with qualities unseen by the eye, and associate, with the fleeting, unretainable *present*, the interesting or momentous properties of the *past*, the distant, and the future.

For the pleasures that are of an external and physical kind are, in reference to *man*, the meanest gifts of the Divine bounty. His grand distinction is found in those intellectual and moral endowments which raise him above the lower animals, and give him an affinity to the higher orders of being—powers that qualify him for tracing the works of God with an intelligent eye, for inquiring into the character of their Divine Author, yea, for rising to the love and enjoyment of the ever-blessed Source of all that is excellent and happy. The soul of man can find no satisfying object—his vast and restless desires no settled repose—till they rise to their Great Original, and, thankful for inferior enjoyments, but not content with them, fix their hopes on a state where the gratifications of sense, if admitted, will hold a very subordinate place, and pure and heavenly joys will fill up all the capacities of the immortal soul.

My brethren, the purest pleasures of which man is susceptible—the only pleasures that are pure and permanent—are found only in conformity to the will of God, in consciousness of His favour, and in the immediate communications of His love, and are, therefore, of necessity suspended on the predominance of holy principles and affections, and cannot exist in a state of prevailing and wilful disobedience. Despoiled of these precious treasures by the treachery of sin, man has not only lost the possession, but been deprived of all remembrance and sense of them ; so that he cannot form one just conception of spiritual and holy enjoyments till Divine grace becomes his teacher, and revives the *idea* by communicating anew the *possession* of them. And in his present fallen state, even the inferior pleasures that remain

are greatly lessened and abridged. Is not the gratification attendant on the discoveries of the *understanding* greatly abridged by the feebleness of the human mind, the frequency of its errors, and the uncertainty of its conclusions? Is not the gratification attendant on the affections of the *heart* greatly impeded by the imperfection of its best feelings, and the perverting influence of contrary propensities? Still there are many alleviations of the mournful consequences of the fall, and numberless proofs of the bounty of Heaven; but how much to be lamented is that perverse bias of our nature which converts the goodness of the great Creator, so conspicuous in the arrangements and productions of the natural world, into an occasion of sin, and in the abuse of His gifts discovers its alienation from the Giver of all good!

What a fatal tendency do we observe in man to set his affections on those meaner gratifications that are designed only to assist his nobler efforts, diverting them from the purpose for which they were intended, like a fraudulent servant who purloins his master's property, or advancing them, in the spirit of idolatry, into that place in his regard which is due to God alone! How generally are the pure enjoyments of spiritual religion unknown and despised! How often are the amiable, though inferior, delights of affection, sympathy, and benevolence disregarded! And in how many instances does the degradation of human nature appear still more grossly in the predominance of the appetites over the affections—in the abuse and excess of animal gratifications, in which, sacrificing his intellectual distinctions, man voluntarily debases himself to a level with the brutes!

But of all the perversions of appetite none appears so

unnatural as a passion for spirituous liquors. The sensation of *thirst* seems to require neither artificial excitement nor artificial indulgence. It is an appendage, as it were, to the sensation of hunger; and while the great Creator, with salutary severity, has required man to procure his bread by the labour of his hands, He grants him a gratuitous supply of the element that quenches his thirst, commanding the clouds to pour down their waters, and employing the earth to filter and convey them through hidden conduits, to be presented in pure and refreshing springs. Who could have believed that an appetite, so simple in itself and so amply provided for, could, by any art of man, have been so excited and indulged as to produce the debasing vice of *drunkenness*? Unquestionably the kindness of Providence is to be acknowledged in furnishing the means of procuring liquors more powerful and exhilarating than the simple element of water; but who could have conceived so unnatural an abuse of this kindness?

And, my brethren, I believe this vice prevails more exceedingly in the island we live in than in any other part of the world, or with the exception, some say, of Sweden. It is by no means common in the more southern parts of Europe, which we are accustomed to regard as far surpassing us in licentiousness. If it be said that our colder climate renders the use of spirituous liquors more agreeable and natural, this is only to say that the measure of our vices corresponds exactly with the measure of our temptations; and this, I apprehend, is very nearly the truth. If exempt in some of our circles from the same degree of profligacy that prevails on some parts of the Continent, may it not be that our temptations or our

opportunities are more limited? for in other instances where circumstances favour the dishonourable pre-eminence, we surpass all rivals in excess. In no region on earth, I apprehend, is that disgrace to humanity, *a drunkard*, so commonly found as in Great Britain and its dependencies, or countries contaminated by its means. The impostor Mohammed, whatever other licentious pleasures he allowed, prohibited the use of wine to all his followers, so that we find it universally condemned and relinquished in the extensive regions that acknowledge his sway; and I adduce this in confirmation of the position that, where man has the choice of the rules that govern him, he conforms them accurately to the measure of his inclinations, denying himself that which costs him no sacrifice, but giving an unbounded licence to the propensities congenial with his circumstances, while the virtues he aspires after are only such as are of easy practice.

I do not wish to exaggerate, and readily acknowledge it as a ground of congratulation, that a considerable improvement has taken place in the habits and manners of the upper classes; among whom, two generations ago, nothing was more common than frequent intoxication, and hospitality was thought to have ill performed its office if it did not triumph over all the defences of reason and moderation, and comprehend the whole company in the roar of riot, or in the stupor of senseless inebriety. Such disgraceful scenes are not now, I believe, witnessed in those circles that assume to be called *good society*. The regulation of a liberal and polite, though luxurious Eastern prince has, partly perhaps through the caprice of fashion, partly we hope through the prevalence of better principles, generally established its authority, that in

drinking "none should compel, but every man do according to his own pleasure." Still even in such company, it is to be feared the rules of Christian moderation are too often violated, and the wine consumed at a British banquet is often matter of surprise to those who have been accustomed to the more temperate habits of other countries.

In reference to those whose circumstances confine them to a more limited range of indulgences, and admit but few opportunities of social enjoyment, none, I trust, whom I now address will suspect me of a wish to lessen their sphere of gratification, or to subtract any from the few superfluities which the honest poor may justly call their own; but who, considering the case of the poor, can forbear to regret that so many abuse the few enjoyments they do possess, and, choosing the worst of the gratifications within their reach, abandon themselves to a habit which excludes every nobler pleasure, and aggravates the misery it seems for a moment to suspend—the desire of which, growing with the indulgence, consumes their substance, injures their health, degrades their character, and banishes peace and happiness from their homes?

The character of a *habitual drunkard* every one is ready to condemn; but it deserves to be considered whether the character be not applicable to some who join in the censure without conceiving themselves involved in it: for those who yield to the encroachments of evil do not observe how soon *acts* grow into *habits*. To constitute the character, it is not necessary that a person be in a state of constant intoxication. The weakness of our nature excludes perpetuity in vice as well as perfection in virtue. The character belongs to him

whose fondness for spirituous liquors is habitual, and who, when temptation invites and opportunity favours, is still ready to indulge the inclination. The perverted bias remains, though the frequency of the acts be determined by circumstances over which he may give himself little control. He is precisely in the situation occupied by all drunkards before the vice came to be habitual and incorrigible ; as men do not at first *intend* to be drunkards, or become so at once in the outset of their career.

The circumstances of the labouring classes put it out of their power to make sensual gratification their daily business ; labour of one kind or other is necessary for their subsistence ; but it is distressing to be forced to conclude, with respect to many, that their industry in any useful occupation is simply the result of necessity—not a willing service cheerfully yielded to the appointment of Providence, but a task submitted to only because they cannot escape it. The motives that urge to labour are powerful—the dread of want, the impulse of pride, or the desire of those very pleasures on which men are bent. Where this last is the strongest motive, we need not wonder that they hasten to gratify it, and after receiving the reward of their labour, betake themselves to the customary scene of folly and of merriment, wasting in selfish gratification those earnings which should have spread comfort and plenty over their families, and, with their companions in excess, debasing equally the body and the mind. Thus are often spent the closing hours of the week, when a conscientious mind finds serious reflection peculiarly seasonable ; and thus is ushered in the dawn of that day which the Supreme Ruler has set apart as a season of sacred rest, that

the soul, freed from the shackles of worldly cares, may rise to holy contemplation and heavenly enjoyment. These misguided ones, while they complain of the toils of the week, reject this blessed rest: they usher in its morning with brawling or worthless discourse; they waste its forenoon in untimely sleep; and when at length they quit the bed of sloth, it cannot be supposed that any inclination is found with them for the services of the Sabbath: the house of God is forsaken, or, if occasionally visited, the place is without attraction, stirring up only self-upbraidings and disgust: other more congenial scenes are sought, and the evening finds them again in the haunts of intemperance, plunging anew in degradation and guilt.* How deeply to be deplored the folly of those who thus pervert the Sabbath into a season of sensual excess, and employ the hours given them to "work out their salvation," in making their destruction sure! Even in this city, where the Sabbath is thought to be distinguished by peculiar observance, and where the crowds we meet resorting to church seem to indicate that none separate themselves for other purposes, there are yet, I have been told, votaries of riot and debauchery who, at its meridian hour, are at pains to exclude the intrusive beams of day, as if they could expel the Sabbath from the week; and who guard against the observance of the sober passenger, that

* Considerable benefit has accrued, within the last two years, from the Act enjoining the closing of public-houses over the whole of the Sabbath, although the Act is in many places feebly enforced and often evaded. How desirable for the welfare of the community, and the observance of all the laws made for the prevention of crime, that these restrictions were extended to all evenings of the week, and the common traffic of the publican banished as a nuisance from our streets!

they may pursue their baneful orgies unreproached by the cheerful light of heaven, and unmolested by the checks of legal authority—sad presage of the impending darkness of an everlasting night !

It has been remarked, that in those departments of labour that are so productive as to allow of a day or two of recreation in the week to those who aim at nothing further than present support for their families, we find men more generally addicted to this vice than in other employments. It is lamentable, if the remark be a true one, that their advantage is often converted into an injury, and that decent and respectable characters are more rare among them than among those whose employments demand a more constant application. I do not now inquire whether the severer exertion required of them may not make a more frequent interruption of labour necessary. Let this be conceded ; and what happy effects might arise from the leisure thus obtained, were it applied to mental or spiritual cultivation, to an improved domestic intercourse, or even to rural recreation, at once solacing to the spirits and restorative of exhausted physical strength ! It is one of the melancholy effects of our fallen condition, that labour must be almost universally pursued with unrelaxing assiduity. Where is the liberal mind that would regret the more frequent mitigation of this imperative law, or that would not rejoice in an extension of the privileges of the poor, were these privileges employed to elevate their character and increase their happiness ? But the use too often made of any intermission of the usual occupations of life, compels us to regard with thankfulness the necessity that imposes them. Man, though created for the noblest purposes, has so miser-

ably deviated from the great end of his being that, in our present position as to morals and education, many can hardly be trusted with the liberty of a day, without proclaiming their incapacity to improve it, by converting it into an occasion of mischief.

When any perverse propensity has taken possession of a man, he becomes ingenious in finding, or in creating, opportunities of indulging it, and is happy when he can conceal his real aim under some plausible pretext, or employ some innocent or laudable object in subservience to his favourite gratification. There are *clubs* formed ostensibly for the benefit of the members, or for benevolent and charitable aid in cases of sickness, that become the apology for frequent meetings held in taverns, which cannot be attended without the accompaniment of drinking. These clubs, from their unworthy accessories, often break up in loss and ruin, and are the means of forming or fostering habits, the injurious influence of which greatly overbalances any benefit derived from them.

But indeed the drinking habits of the country may be seen through all the humbler stations in society: they comprehend persons of all descriptions, attach themselves to all circumstances, and accompany the whole progress of life. Commenced at the birth of a child, they are renewed at his baptism; they signalise his entering on an apprenticeship, or commencing business for himself—his change of residence or of occupation; they grace his marriage, and every birth or death in his family; and after making a part of his every social transaction or enjoyment, are renewed over his grave. These drinking customs, by creating a constant demand for intoxicating liquors, naturally lead to the provision of a

supply. The vast number of public-houses of a low description that meet the eye in some districts of our towns, forces us to conclude that the numbers that frequent them are great indeed—so great, that in these localities we query who are left to be their customers. And the general prevalence of a debasing love of intoxicating liquors may be still more clearly inferred from the incredible number of shops where they are sold; insomuch that there is scarcely a trader dealing in such articles as are usually consumed by a family, that does not consider the sale of such liquors as an attraction indispensably necessary to his success in business. If to be "*partakers* of other men's sins," be a character to be avoided, how much more to be *prompters* of them, and active agents in furnishing the temptation!

Of all the various forms of misery which drunkenness associates with itself, none is more deplorable than that which is presented in the case of him who is united with a family under the character of *husband* and *father*. Deaf to the voice of nature, and hardened against reproof, he learns to see his children famishing around him, and to meet the imploring looks and reasonable remonstrances of her whom he is bound to support and protect, with a savage obstinacy and lawless defiance. His home becomes a scene of reproach and antipathy—divested by degrees of every ornament, and even of every necessary utensil that gave the dignity of comfort to the humble dwelling—and he leaves its naked walls and dejected inhabitants to mix with his Bacchanalian throng, and drown in destructive draughts reflections full of remorse, and prospects loaded with misery. What a contrast does his house present to all the harmonies of domestic union, the benefits

of parental instruction, the endearments of parental affection and example ! What ruin has he to answer for in the souls that he leads with him, or draws after him, to perdition !

It will readily occur to you that the present season of the year,—a season that addresses to every considerate mind a solemn call to serious reflection on the past, and prayerful anticipation of the future,—is often pre-eminently marked by daring abuse of the bounty of Providence and degradation of the rational powers of man. By many it seems regarded as a season that exempts from common restraints, leaves them free to lawless pleasure, and makes it almost meritorious to tempt others to excess. The last days of the *old* and the first of the *new* year have been distinguished above all others by the violation of moral rules. The more respectable and orderly part of the community have found it necessary to shun many places of public resort from fear of incurring insult and injury—whole streets that present scenes of most degrading and disgusting wickedness. What specimen can we have of human nature more humiliating than a human being reduced by a voluntary crime to the helplessness of infancy, the ridicule of abandoned associates ; or, with half-extinguished powers of reflection, but passions inflamed, led “like an ox to the slaughter, or like a fool to the correction of the stocks ?”

Suffer me to warn you, my dear friends, some who may be in exposed circumstances, that you are at least professors of higher principles, and that you allow not yourselves to fall in with the stream, or to be ensnared by pernicious example. There is no man bearing the name of *brother* in a Christian community, uniting with us in our religious services and in the communion of the table of the Lord, who

brings such a scandal on the name he bears, and the community with which he is associated, as one who ventures his hours of recreation nigh to such associates, or partakes in any degree in such scenes. It belongs to you to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them." To check sin in others, to use your endeavours to reclaim the vicious, and to urge and invite them to better habits, is a point in which your honour and fidelity, as followers and servants of Christ, are intimately connected. And let not those who have houses exercise their hospitality in a way injurious to those who receive it. Boon nature furnishes abundant supplies of what is wholesome for the frame and agreeable to the taste, whether of the young or the aged, without having recourse to those inebriating and inflammatory liquors which only custom and early use could have bribed the palate to relish. To offer such as treats to young people is senseless barbarity—for example, to the boys and girls employed in carrying milk from house to house, or to the baker's boy who brings your rolls for breakfast. To give it even to those of mature years is to encourage a habit you should help them to resist. How easy is it to find substitutes more pleasing and acceptable than this, for the expression of our kindness and yearly congratulatory good wishes?

I cannot quit the general subject of these observations without remarking how frequent are the admonitions of the Scriptures against the vice of which we have been speaking, and how pointed their condemnation of it. Observant, not only of the general propensities of human nature, but of all the aspects and consequences of sin, the sacred writers unite in reprobating drunkenness; at one time pointing out the

degradation it inflicts on its votaries ; at another, the ruin it brings on their families ; at another, the still more dreadful destruction it prepares for a future world. In the New Testament, drunkenness is conspicuous among those *works of the flesh* that exclude from the kingdom of heaven, and lead down to that place of "outer darkness, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." If you value your well-being in time or in eternity, if you would shun that *second death* that is the wages of sin, that "shame and everlasting contempt" in which its short-lived pleasures terminate, beware of this vice : "Take heed, lest at any time ye be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the day of the Lord overtake you unawares."

To the admonition against excess in wine the apostle subjoins a precept of a very different character—"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; but *be filled with the Spirit.*" This precept I propose to bring under your consideration in another discourse. Meanwhile, I beseech you all to seek this heavenly blessing—to ask of Him who has declared His willingness to give it, this "living water," even the Spirit of God. "If," said he to the woman of Samaria, "thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, *Give me to drink*, thou wouldest have asked, and *He* would have given thee *living water.*" "Ask, and ye shall receive." And if you know anything of the grace of God, be careful to foster the blessed influence of the Spirit, as the best and most effectual preservative against all vicious and debasing inclinations. Let Christ be in you—your *peace*, your *life*, your *hope* ; and then, whatever self-denial may be required, you will have strength according to your day ; and, your souls being *filled with the Spirit*, "*your joy shall be full.*"

XIX.

THE REMEDY AND SUBSTITUTE.

PREACHED ON THE FIRST SABBATH OF THE YEAR.

“ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; but be filled with the Spirit.”
—EPH. v. 18.

IN addressing you on a former occasion from this text, I might seem to some to dwell longer than was needful on a vice of which all acknowledge the odiousness, although few exert the zeal which the occasion calls for, to arrest and restrain its virulence. The malignity of the vice, and the extent of its prevalence, must be my apology ; and still more the inadequacy of all that has yet been done to repress it, and the necessity of further more general and vigorous measures. But we now proceed to a subject more congenial with the feelings of the better instructed and sincerely pious of my flock. To them I need scarcely remark, that, to avoid excess in wine and strong drink, is but a small point gained, and of very temporary benefit, if we proceed no farther. For we must not only “ cast off the works of darkness,” but “ put on the armour of light.” It is not the *form* of morality, but “ *the power of godliness* ” that we must attain ; and we must strive to know it in the *fulness* of its blessings. Accordingly, in opposition to the indulgence of sensual appetite, the apostle in-

vites believers to spiritual enjoyment in those abundant communications which the Spirit of God is ever ready to impart.

Large encomiums have been passed on wine and strong drink, as a short and easy introduction to happiness, a sovereign remedy for sorrow, a ready antidote against the overwhelming cares and perplexities of life, a stimulant which warms the soul with gladsome impulses, and suffuses the bosom with a tide of liberal, tender, and benevolent emotions. Alas ! does not such an illusion shew that man is, by some strange disaster, desperately bereft of happiness ? For could any one who felt himself in possession of the treasure voluntarily relinquish the consciousness of it ? or think his enjoyment increased by that which confused his apprehensions, blunted his memory, and, as it were, distracted and withdrew him from himself ? Does he not bear about with him, in his shifting expedients, the internal evidence of his lapsed and degraded condition ; retaining dignity enough to know himself to be miserable, with meanness enough to seek distraction from this impression, and an oblivion of self, in the most childish pastimes, and even in the most contemptible vices ? * If indeed man, helpless as he is, were thrown thus on his own resources, it were not perhaps wise to molest him with a profounder consideration of the sources of his wretchedness, or to urge on him a higher morality than the Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But thanks be to God, he is not thus left in hopeless despair. Under our happy gospel dispensation, men are not called upon to relinquish their lowest and vulgarest forms of pleasure without a substitute, or to give away what they have erroneously

* Suggested in Pascal's "Thoughts."

clung to as a source of enjoyment or mitigation of sorrow, but in exchange for the full and overflowing treasure of spiritual, unchanging, everlasting happiness.

“Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; but *be filled with the Spirit.*” By an abrupt and almost violent transition, the apostle passes at once from the degradation of sensual excess, to the elevation of the fulness of spiritual joy. He had found it necessary to guard those whom he addressed against a vice that was perhaps prevalent in Ephesus—but instantly, as if the admonition were almost an affront, he rises to his usual lofty views of the character and privileges of believers ; and as each of Christ’s true disciples is a “temple of God” and “an habitation of God through the Spirit,” he calls on them to yield their souls to the full realisation of their high calling.

Our Lord, in taking leave of his disciples, assured them that his absence in the body would be more than compensated by the presence of His Spirit, who should “guide them into all truth,” “sanctify” and “fill them with all joy and peace in believing.” In execution of these offices, He was to “abide” with the Church “for ever,” the Divine and Almighty Author of all grace and holiness in man. His sacred influence is essential to the possession of the Christian character ; for “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His ;” and is equally necessary in every instance to enable us either effectually to “mortify the deeds of the body,” or to exercise those graces and virtues by which we are to glorify our heavenly Father.

Now, there is no limit to His gracious communications, except those which the narrowness of our minds presents,

It is our privilege and our duty to be "*filled with the Spirit*" in all the faculties and affections of our souls—our understanding replenished with Divine truth—our desires satisfied with spiritual blessings—our hearts expanded to the utmost extent of their capacity with "the love of God shed abroad" in them. That Divine Agent, whose grace is not diminished by the largest munificence, is still ready, as aforetime, to refresh His heritage with plenteous showers, and to communicate to the thirsty soul a "blessing so large that there shall not be room to receive it." There is "consolation in Christ, comfort in love, fellowship of the Spirit," that can be known only by those who experience it, often rising, even in this life, to "joy unspeakable and full of glory." These are the blessings to which, as Christians, we should aspire; nor should we be satisfied with an inferior or limited share of them; still we must "reckon that we have not attained, neither are perfect," and, "forgetting the things that are behind, must press forward to those that are before," till we be "filled with all the fulness of God."

But to be filled with spiritual blessings, doubtless, implies that we have a supreme *relish* for this sort of happiness. It cannot, in the nature of things, be possessed except by those who "hunger and thirst" after it; for those who persist in negligence and sin, even if we suppose this blessing conferred upon them, would quickly lose what they had attained by the combination of incompatible principles, and would, of necessity, soon be deprived of the gift, in chastisement of its abuse, and be left to learn the value of the boon despised by the desolation attending its loss. I offer a few remarks in illustration of the subject:—

I. In order to our being filled with the Spirit, we must *make room for the Spirit*. The heart must be emptied of other things with which the Spirit cannot coalesce or associate. We must put away, honestly and earnestly, the discordant rebellious affections that form part of our nature—our sloth, sensuality, and worldly-mindedness, with all allowed guile whether in reference to God or man. We must “put off the old man,” if we would “put on the new”—must banish and exclude the rule of sinful principles and passions, if we would have the Spirit to dwell in the temple of our hearts. For want of this watchfulness and uprightness of purpose, many, whom we would not charge with direct insincerity, go mourning all their days, full of complaint and sighing; their highest attainment being but a little transient gleam of elevation, soon obscured again by the clouds of doubt and distraction; apathy and deadness ensue, and are acquiesced in as a resource from the pain of a conflict perpetually unsuccessful—of effort without honour, of toil unproductive of reward. The unhappy professor, the meanwhile, may retain “a name to live.” He has had his early convictions, his hopes, and fears, and desires—the dawns of a morning that has not brightened into day. He had seemed to make his election of the better part, to withdraw himself from the broad road, to cast in his lot with the Lord’s people; but sick, declining as he is, and ready to die, who can say whether he will revive or perish—whether there be yet among his dying embers some sparks of vital warmth on which the Spirit may deign to breathe in reviving influences, or whether, famishing, it may be, under gospel ordinances, he will pine away in the leanness of his soul, a castaway not found

among the vessels that reach the harbour? My brethren, if there be among you any that are thus languishing, and I doubt not that there are, let my words be for reproof to you. *Now* is the time to seek reviving influence—to ask the Lord to take up your case. Let His Spirit search you now, discerning your real state, and proving to you the thoughts and intents of your hearts. “Now is the accepted time;” to-morrow may be a day too late for this investigation.

But among persons of less equivocal character and better established principle, there are those who complain of their lack of joy, and of the faintness and transitory duration of their best consolations. I would ask of such whether they have *made room* for the Spirit in their hearts,—whether their reliance on Him be sincere, simple, entire,—whether they lean on Him so as that He feels their weight, and draw assistance from Him so as that He knows they have no other dependence. If we go to Him only when we are in a strait, and seek help only for extraordinary emergencies, and *do for ourselves*, with no distrust of our ability to perform our common duties, no wonder if He who searches the heart draw back from our pretensions to communion with Him, and require us to importune Him again and again, before He own our claims or smile propitiously on our undertakings. This sentiment may be illustrated in the words of a Christian poet (Madame Guyon, translated by Cowper):—

The chaste in heart, who fear to grieve
The gracious Spirit they receive,
His work distinctly trace;
And, strong in undissembled love,
Boldly assert and clearly prove
Their hearts His dwelling-place.

But ah ! if foul and wilful sin
Stain and dishonour us within,
Farewell the bliss we knew !
Again the slaves of nature's sway,
In labyrinths of our own we stray,
Without a guide or clew.

II. We must seek after *simplicity of faith in Christ*, with whom is the residue of the Spirit purchased for us, and ever at His disposal on our behalf. Our faith must rest solely and simply on Him whose office it is to give the Spirit, and that with entire and abiding trust. The faith of some yields them slender support, being enfeebled by a combination of many other ingredients. They bring their doubts, their fears, anxieties, and scruples, nay, their unbelief itself, into exercise, and this they call their faith. No wonder if it yield them not strength and peace. It is the nature of faith to fill the soul "with all joy and peace in believing ;" this is its effect in its full, free, unrestrained exercise ; but no such fruits are promised to our doubts, and fears, and scruples, that hang, like parasitical weeds, about the fibres of our faith, checking its vigour, exhausting its nutriment, and almost stifling its existence.

Some seem to think it safer to *doubt* and to *mistrust*, and would almost make religion consist in the existence of these unhappy feelings. Uncertain as to their state, and but half weaned from their sins, they conclude that it is best to err on the safe side, by mistrusting themselves, and feel as if all their spiritual impressions would evaporate if these uneasy symptoms were to forsake them. Their doubts, and fears, and anxieties they regard as evidences of spiritual life, just as painful wounds felt in the body shew that it is not dead but retains life and feeling ; and the detection of these evils, and

the pain occasioned thereby, constitute their chief evidence of latent grace in their souls. But is not that state of mind culpable which clings to these undesirable feelings as the best proof of its hope? Do they expect their doubts and fears to save them? Or are these the *fruits of the Spirit*? They are, doubtless, right in mistrusting themselves, but ought not self-mistrust to urge them to the Saviour, in whom their help is found? Admitting that these uneasy feelings are suitable by reason of the prevalence of unsubdued sin, yet surely they should not be rested in. And those who fear to relinquish these for a happier state of mind, lest by so doing they should lose *their all* in religion, shew how little they apprehend the true grace of the gospel, and should look to themselves, lest they be found to be building, not upon Christ's righteousness, but upon their own attainments, in detecting sin, and regretting, or professing to regret it, though still they put it not away. For if these feelings were not in some way their confidence, why should they fear to lay them aside and relinquish them? These actings of their minds form no part of the Redeemer's righteousness, any more than they can furnish a substitute in its absence; neither are they among the seemly productions of His Spirit with which He loves to see His followers adorned. These will fall off and be flung aside, when the fulness and preciousness of Christ and His righteousness are discovered. Yet it may be good for the soul to feel the tossings and heavings of uncertainty, while nature struggles with grace in unfinished conflict, that it may know the joy of casting off all its vain expectations, and embracing the Saviour when He is pleased to reveal Himself in the plenitude of His blessings.

There is a dishonourable, a treacherous *reserve of affection*, often concealed from the soul that maintains it, under the mask of a supposed humility. It is satisfied to have but "little forgiven,"—that is, in its own apprehension,—so that *little love* may be due in return ; and seems to reserve a loophole of escape from the reproach of unfaithfulness and ingratitude, by declining the more intimate favour of God, and shunning the extent of obligation which the unreserved communications of His goodness would impose. Such persons are in no danger of being "filled with the Spirit," seeing they are almost jealous of His influence, yielding Him but a partial ascendancy, and checking His sovereign movements by their own shallow and contracted affections.

III. In order to our being *filled with the Spirit*, we must *yield ourselves* implicitly to *His direction*, resolved to follow Him all lengths, without respect to consequences, with a full relinquishment of everything inconsistent with His will. It must be our care to "*seek*" always "*first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness." While any selfish or worldly principle keeps its hold of us, though we profess to confine it to a secondary place, whether it be love of *wealth*, or *fame*, or *advancement in society*, in proportion as such motives prevail, our Christian energy will be weakened, and our lustre impaired in the eye of Him by whose judgment we stand or fall. How many, professing a zeal for God and for eternal life, do we see *staggered*, like the young man in the gospel, when they find their favourite propensities condemned, and duties required to which they are especially averse ! Then the Master's words become "*hard sayings*" to them—there is

nothing *but this* they should have found impossible. Alas, how often, arrived at that fatal crisis, do we see them "depart, and walk no more with Him!"

There are those whom conscience seems to bind to a somewhat *forced allegiance*, without conciliating their affections or satisfying their judgment. Drawn in contrary directions, and tossed to and fro by the winds of opinion or temptation, how lamentably will they appear to undo their work and retrace their steps! It is not that the Spirit was wanting in His admonitions and aids, or that God proved a *wilderness* to them: but some idol has seated itself in the throne; there is an *Achan* in the camp, some *golden wedge* or *Babylonish garment* troubles the kingdom of the soul. In reference to them, one might think it was *man*, not *God*, whom they were bound to please; that religion was, in some of its requisitions, an *evil* to be tolerated only because it could not be eluded; that the best decision is to adhere only to as much of it as we *dare not* dispense with, and to retain as much of the world as safety may admit of. It seems hard not to be allowed to go to heaven with the world's pleasures; or, relinquishing many of these, that we may not retain so much as its *good-will*. Religion were good, if the *reproach of the cross* could be separated from it. Let us guard ourselves, my beloved brethren, against these delusive reasonings. Let us beware of thinking anything for our interest as *men*, that does not make for it as *Christians*. It is well for us to be satisfied with the lot that Providence assigns, asking neither riches, nor talents, nor influence, however these might promise to promote our usefulness, except as consecrated in the reception of them with higher degrees of

grace, that God may be honoured in His gifts, and our souls strengthened, and not enfeebled, by His liberality.

Having thus adverted to the obstacles that prevent and impede our spiritual attainments, I would now urge on you the *desirableness*, or rather *necessity*, of aiming at a *fulness* of spiritual blessings. If the Almighty Proprietor of all had tempted our weakness with the proposal of an *imperfect salvation*, presenting a graduated scale of happiness adapted to our frailty—securing *impunity*, or a very moderate reward, to those who should have risked the least, and aimed the most heartlessly at obtaining His approbation; if there were, moreover, in this anomalous paradise, a sufficient portion of neutral ground appropriated to the reception of such as, on this supposed system, should have barely missed “the damnation of hell;” it is easy to determine in which region all men would have fixed their option: or, however high their aims at the outset, there is little room to doubt that the baser instincts of nature would have gained the predominance over the more elevated, and that however the grace of God had been offered for our furtherance and help, we should have universally acquiesced in very inferior attainments, and conformed ourselves to that condition which, while it secured us from misery, removed us farthest from God and brought us the least under obligation to Him.

I venture to assert further, that had God appointed a *purgatory*, where, by years of penal suffering, men might wipe off the stain of a life of pleasurable sin, there would be candidates only for the mitigated intervening punishment; and heaven, as to all the exertion that man would make to attain

it, would be left empty of human inmates. But God's wisdom is infinitely higher and holier than man's, and His mercy is far better to us than our own choice. I would have you mark the advantages, and the adaptation to our character, that distinguish our Scripture system, which presents no alternative between utter ruin and the transcendent blessedness of a perfect and everlasting salvation; in which the Supreme Legislator, addressing us with authority, yet silencing our complaint of weakness by the communication of His own power, makes no compromise with sin, and condescends to no acceptance of a partial and insincere virtue, but demands of us an entire conformity with himself, requiring in us, not only an abnegation of low sensual delights, but, furthermore, the sublime attainment of being "*filled with the Spirit.*"

And how blessed the transition, let those declare who have experienced it,—how adequate the remedy, provided by infinite grace, to the disease of our nature,—how easy in its application to those whose hearts are opened to attend to the things belonging to their peace! And how advantageous the exchange—from the gulph of ruin, begun and almost completed, to heights of happiness unknown and unthought of before; from the tyranny of malevolent passions, always painful in their exercise—from the pangs of remorse, and the terrors of apprehended judgment, to peace with God, to the joys of heaven already begun in the "love shed abroad in the heart," and to the experience of all those sweet and ennobling graces of the Holy Spirit that are hardly more blessed in their effects than delicious in their exercise!

To my young friends, I would suggest that a *little religion* tends only to unsettle the soul, and to introduce a tumult

and a struggle betwixt conflicting and irreconcilable elements But he who is "filled with the Spirit," "as the bowls on the altar," has perfect peace, capable of increase only by the enlargement of his faculties. And what a blessed emancipation has he obtained from all the cares and fears, the distracting passions, the harassing competitions, that occupy the thoughts of the world's adherents, and that once occupied his own ! What a happy oblivion of anxious sorrow, of selfish solicitude, of responsibility respecting his lot or future prospects, attends him who has an *Almighty Father* and an *inheritance prepared for him in the heavens !* There is a conscious fullness of happiness, an abandonment of the soul to enjoyment, that leads to no danger and implies no excess. Happy they by whom *old things* are forgotten ; on whose memories the impressions of former joys have lost their hold and attraction ! Is not this the water of which he who drinks, thirsts no more ? Is not this the hilarity of which the Spirit speaks when He says, that "corn shall make the young men cheerful and new wine the maids?"

Before concluding, I would offer a word or two of counsel to different parties. Is there here any poor bewildered sinner who has been the slave of vicious habits, whose iniquities now "compass him at his heels," burdening his conscience with the alarm of impending ruin ? Discouraged, perhaps, from commencing a reformation he has formerly attempted in vain, a stranger to the treasures of mercy and grace, he is ready again to lie down in his degeneracy, to seek his quiet in the deadening of those throbs of fear and apprehension that give the only signs of beginning life in his forlorn case. Alas, my friend, I dare not say that your fears exaggerate your melan-

choly condition. Your calamity is no delusion of a morbid imagination : for "as the Lord liveth, there is but a step betwixt thee and death !" But the gospel were not the "glad tidings" we are commissioned to declare it to be, if it did not take your case into special consideration. You are at least *in need* of mercy, and not wholly unconscious of your want of it. You have some experience of those feelings that made "publicans and harlots," and many, the outcasts of society, follow the Saviour, and "wonder at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth." You have no elaborate structure of good works, no self-invented system, to pull down, that obstructs the sinner's acceptance of a free unconditional salvation. The more cheaply the boon can be obtained, the better is it adapted to the state of your character and resources. Since, then, you have not *good works* to save you, let your *sins* save you by forcing you at once to the arms of a merciful Saviour. You have no apology for delay : *now* sentenced and under death's dominion, like the Samaritan lepers, if *He* refuse you, you "*can but die.*" But never, on His word I attest it, till He revoke His invitation, "Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,"—never till He repeal His gracious declaration, "Whosoever cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out," will your claim be disregarded by Him. Your wants are not peculiar ; neither will you be left to prove *the first, the only penitent* His mercy has ever rejected.

Perhaps your thoughts suggest to you that you are *not penitent*, and check you in the appropriation of such invitations and promises as these. I grant your contrition is not great ; and if it were, it must still be estimated as of small

account. The command that God lays on you at this moment is, that you believe now *in Jesus* whom He hath sent, and transfer to abler hands than your own the work of your salvation. That which is to you so difficult as to be *impossible*, is to Him easy as His daily and familiar work. Your heart, though obdurate, His Spirit can soften; yield yourself to His Almighty influence: though hard as the rock in Horeb, His smiting rod will cause its penitential waters to gush forth.

There is another interesting class to whom I would address a word of admonition—those who have, as we trust, entered upon, and are not far advanced beyond the starting-point in the Christian race. Your circumstances are delicate, my young friends; I am “jealous over you with godly jealousy.” To you are committed sacred interests and high responsibility. Beware of a spirit of sloth and remissness; of the temptation of thinking your point sufficiently secured, and that it shall still be well with you though you relax your endeavours and do as you see others do. We hold the *worldling* culpable because he applies the gifts of Providence only to *his own* peculiar gratifications: but how much more disingenuous the *Christian* who usurps the possession of spiritual blessings that he may consume *them* upon his lusts! They are not bestowed upon you that you may be idle, but to render your work and your way delightful to you. When they cease to produce this effect, that Spirit whose gifts they are is grieved by their abuse, and will surely withdraw the possession of which you relinquish the exercise and the benefit. Young Christians are often much injured by adopting those whom they see before them on the Christian road, as

models for imitation, and regulating their aims, not by the *standard* of Scripture precept, but by the faulty and imperfect attainments of the professors around them. How very few are faithful to the impressions they imbibed first from their heavenly Instructor, "conferring not with flesh and blood," but seeking counsel of "Him who has called them with an holy calling!" You have nothing to do with others. As men are not to be your judges, their conscience can never furnish the standard of your obligations. They may, for aught you know, be in a declining state, held by some peculiar temptation, or have never been perfectly instructed. Rather, let your resolution be that of an eminent divine and most strenuous labourer in the vineyard, who, touched with the saying, "*A faithful man who shall find?*" resolved that, were there to be but *one such* in each generation, *he*, in his, would be that individual.

Try, moreover, to be engaged in works becoming God's children, and you will find light thrown upon *His word* as well as upon *your own path*. "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;" shall know this by the concurring testimony of the Word and of his own heart in harmony with it. I remember the case of a poor man, who passed a sleepless night agitated with anxiety about his soul: he heard in the silent hours the movement of one that had entered his house secretly, purloining from the store of provision laid up for his cow in the outer part of his humble dwelling. Going up to him, he said, "My friend let me give you what you want; you are sincerely welcome: take all this, and come for more, if you will: I would not, for all I have in the world, that you

should bring trouble on your soul by breaking God's commandment." The exercise of mercy to his fellow-sinner brought light into the poor man's mind and peace to his afflicted conscience. The obstructing cloud was removed, and he tasted from that moment the joy of a full forgiveness and perfect reconciliation. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Doubt not that, ere long, He will "subdue your adversaries under you; will feed you also with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock will satisfy your longing soul. Your peace shall flow in like the swelling river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea."

XX.

CÆSAR'S CLAIMS AND GOD'S CLAIMS.

PREACHED IN HIGH CHURCH AT THE ELECTION OF MAGISTRATES
AND COUNCIL, 4TH OCTOBER 1831.

“And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Cæsar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”—
MATT. xxii. 20, 21.

THE government of the Jews, in its original constitution, was a *Theocracy*, God being, in an appropriate sense, the *King* of Israel. Having, in prosecution of His covenant with Abraham, rescued the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, and, after feeding them for forty years in the wilderness, established them in the promised land, He demanded of them such allegiance as was due to a Benefactor so generous and divine; prescribing a code of laws, holy, just, and good, adapted to their condition and circumstances in reference to the neighbouring nations, including such judicial and political regulations as provided for their security and welfare, and engaged for them the highest national prosperity so long as they were faithful in their allegiance. The people, being appealed to by their gracious Divine Sovereign in the solemn summons, “Choose ye this day *whom* ye will serve,” with one heart

and voice professed their acquiescence and determination to serve the Lord, and took a solemn oath ratifying their adherence and recording it in a book.

In return for protection and safety, their heavenly King claimed from them the duty of subjects, and prescribed the tribute to be paid for the support of their government. For He meant not, in His superintendence of their affairs, to depart from the established principles of human societies. Their own efforts were to be the means of their safety, their industry was to be the spring of their prosperity, and each man was to contribute his share to the wealth and stability of the realm. Besides the tithe of the produce of the land set apart for the Levites, and many oblations stated and occasional, a tax of half a shekel annually, payable on the solemn day of atonement, was exacted of every Israelite from twenty years old and upward. While sincere and faithful in their loyalty, the Divine protection and blessing were signally continued with them. When, at a later period, increased in numbers and ambitious of a place of distinction among the nations around them, they desired a *king*, the Lord was pleased to accede to their request, but with fatherly expressions of disapprobation, and warning them of the loss they would sustain by the substitution of regal state for godliness and simplicity—specially limiting the office to one of their own brethren, and prohibiting the rule of a stranger: “Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.”*

* Deut. xvii. 15.

The facts now stated appear to have been the grounds on which our Lord's enemies professed to proceed in their attempt to ensnare Him. The Jews, proud of their ancestry, of the special and miraculous Providence that presided over them, and of the *Theocracy* that constituted them *Jehovah's peculiar people*, could ill brook submission to a foreign yoke; and the zealots among them contended that to pay tribute was to desert their country's cause, and to break the holy covenant. Swelling with pride, not with patriotism, they murmured against their conquerors, but did not humble themselves before the Judge of all; and the fiery passions of the multitude were fostered by the Pharisees, who sought their personal aggrandisement in the popular discontent. On the other hand, the *Herodians* took part with the predominant power, and denounced as traitors all who disputed the claims of the Roman government. Both parties opposed the Teacher sent from God, and joined in putting a question, the reply to which, they expected, would necessarily implicate Him with either the *popular* or the *court* party, undermining His influence with the people if He should *approve* the giving of tribute, or rousing the resentment of the secular power if He should *disapprove*: "Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?"

I need scarcely say that the imposing of tribute is a necessary function of all governments. If you consider their extensive jurisdiction, comprising the defence of the country against injury or invasion, the administration of justice

between man and man, the maintenance of a due police—not to mention the help that should be given to religious, educational, and charitable purposes—you must see the necessity of the exaction of tribute, and the duty of the subject to comply with it. He who evades the taxes imposed by the proper authority, and dishonourably declines his share of the public charges, not only acts unfaithfully to his allegiance, but injures the whole community, since the burden he shifts from himself must fall the heavier on others. The duty of paying “tribute to whom it is due” is pointedly enjoined in the New Testament, and if incumbent under the arbitrary governments then existing, it certainly is not less so under *our own*, of which one great recommendation is that the taxes are imposed only by the chosen representatives of the people. But the question proposed to our Lord related to a specific case, whether it were lawful for *the Jews*, being the privileged people of Jehovah, to give tribute to *Cæsar*, a foreign and heathen power. Yet the question was manifestly a captious one. For if every government must provide for its wants by imposing taxation, and that even on its own immediate subjects, it cannot be expected that its foreign dependencies should be exempted, nor can they, sharing in the protection of the state, justly claim such exemption.

The contrary policy has usually been but too prevalent, and was practised by the Jews themselves when in possession of power—I mean the custom of taxing foreign dependencies and leaving their own subjects free. In the early part of Solomon's reign, when Israel's glory was in its zenith, that prince protected his own people from tribute, and provided the funds necessary for the state from the neighbouring nations

that were subject to him ; though toward the close of his reign he taxed his own people, and by his excessive levies provoked the revolt of the ten tribes on the accession of his imprudent successor. When the Jews became subject to Babylon, they paid tribute to that power, and were counselled by Jeremiah and the other prophets to submit to the appointments of Providence. Under the Persian monarchy, when Zerubbabel and his associates returned to Jerusalem, it was stated, as demonstrating the former power of the Jews, that their kings had drawn toll and tribute from the nations beyond the river, while it was alleged that they would not pay it themselves. With these facts before them, what occasion was there for the question of the Pharisees and Herodians? If, having forfeited the Divine protection in their national independence, they had become subject to the Roman yoke, what could they do but bear that yoke? If the Romans had now reigned over them for a hundred years, and with considerable mildness and equity, was it to be made a question whether the appointed tribute, which appears to have been not unreasonable, was to be paid? And was this question to be referred to Him who disclaimed all secular authority and asserted only a spiritual office? Our Lord did not conceal His knowledge of their sinister purpose: "Why tempt ye me, ye *hypocrites*?" There are occasions when it is fit to give men the appellations they deserve. They sought to darken His character; He simply holds the light of truth to theirs. But further, He convicts them out of their own mouth. "Shew me the tribute money: whose image and superscription hath it? Cæsar's. Render then to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

This answer of our Lord seems to imply that the reception and use of the money having Cæsar's image and superscription was an admission of his authority on the part of the people, an acknowledgment of him as the protector of property and the arbiter in civil and pecuniary transactions. In all communities of men, money of one kind or other is required to facilitate those exchanges of property that are essential in society. In most countries the precious metals have been adopted as the medium of exchange, being recommended by their durability, their limited abundance, and the ease with which they are transferred from hand to hand. And thus used, they have in civilised countries been placed under the regulation of the executive government, whose officers determine their quality and weight and value, and impress the *mark*—the image and superscription that attests their genuineness. Our Lord assumes the principle that the reception of the coin as the current medium of exchange is an acknowledgment of the government that issues it, and thus answers the question out of the mouth of the inquirers. If they acknowledged the authority of Cæsar, let them render him due obedience; and since they drew their money from the imperial mint, let them restore the due portion to the imperial treasury. A certain tribute was fit and necessary: our Lord enters not into any detail of the duties either of a government or of its subjects; His object was rather to expose the insincerity of the inquirers than to resolve their pretended doubts. The authority of Cæsar was manifestly acknowledged by the Jews: "Render therefore to Cæsar," he says, "the things which are Cæsar's, and render to God the things that are God's." Cæsar has claims, and God has

claims : fulfil the just demands of both ; they will be found not incompatible. But if there be any inconsistency, then judge which of the parties is most worthy of honour. Give to Cæsar the duty you owe to him, but reserve for God the duty you owe to Him. In things of this life Cæsar has certain claims ; but God's claims embrace both the things of this life and those of another. In pecuniary transactions Cæsar is to be acknowledged, God in all transactions ; Cæsar claims a little tribute of money, God the unreserved tribute of the whole man.

Our Lord seems to intimate that Cæsar's claims to a tribute of homage from us extend as widely as the emblems of his authority and protection extend ; in other words, that it is our duty to honour and obey the chief magistrate in as far as we come in contact with him as the administrator of the law, the guardian of property, and the maintainer of justice and equity. And of all the insignia of kings, there is not any that better proclaims their office and authority than the coin impressed with their image. For while other indications of majesty—in courts, in palaces, in fleets and armies—are either *local*, being confined to particular places, or *occasional*, limited to particular times, the coin of the realm, circulated in every part of the empire, employed in every transaction, entering into every house and every hand, presents a perpetual, universal memorial of the authority of the king, as well as an illustration of his office as guarding the transactions and the property of his subjects.

Now I wish you to consider this principle in a higher application. Look to the Great King, the King of the whole earth. How universal and unceasing is the tribute due to

Him ! For where find we not the emblems of His authority, the signs of His providence, and the benefits of His administration ? We need not go to the imperial court of heaven, there to contemplate the thousand thousands that compose His train, or take our stand on the loftiest pinnacle of creation, thence to survey His boundless dominions : for *what* is there in which we may not read the image and superscription of God ? Is it not legible, not only in the heavens with their innumerable suns and planetary systems, and, nearer home, on the earth with its skies and seas and mountains, but in the minutest and obscurest productions ? not only in the *cedar* that towers in Lebanon, but in the *hyssop* that springeth out of the wall ? not in the spreading oak only, the growth of centuries, but in the tints of the hedge-side flower, and in its slender fibrous anatomy revealed to us by the microscope ? What living creature is there that shews not the *superscription* of its Creator in the wondrous mechanism and organisation of its frame, in its adaptation to the sphere of its existence, and in all the provision made for its sustenance and comfort ? What mineral, buried far from light in the depths of the earth, but bears in its congregated materials, and in the slow process of its formation, the impress of the Almighty Artificer ? If we look abroad, how is the coin of heaven distributed to us, as servants of the soil, scattered around in the varied effusions of a Divine munificence ! Who can refuse to acknowledge it in those gifts of Providence common to all, and therefore so generally undervalued—the light of day, the breath of life, the water of the brook, the fruits of the earth ? Who can refuse to acknowledge it in the blessings flowing from the relations of life—in the care of the

parent over the child, in the mutual and reciprocated benefits of social life, in the solace of sympathy, in the endearments of affection? Who can refuse to see it in the gifts that are peculiar to individuals? Would you know the treasury whence wealth and honour come? David will shew it you: "Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength to all."*

But to look only at a single example specially affecting ourselves: Where, in this lower world, is the *image and superscription* of God so visible as in His creature *man*? How clearly legible in the structure of his body, in its adaptation both to the laws of the material world his habitation, and to the circumstances of the inferior animals his servants; in those exquisite organs of perception which unfold nature in all its variety to his sight, and hearing, and touch, and taste, and smell; in the arrangement of his bones, and muscles, and nerves, that enable him to move from place to place, and apply his powers to innumerable operations; in the delightful sensations of buoyant health, in the salutary admonitions of pain, in his erect frame and heaven-directed look? But still more in the wonderful faculties of his mind, in the powers of thought, reason, judgment, choice, conscience; in his hopes and fears; in his affections of love, hatred, admiration, resentment, gratitude—in these, I say, who but must acknowledge the *superscription* of God? who but must recognise the Divine *image* itself, however defaced by those sinful principles that have perverted the quality, though not destroyed the essence of the soul?

* 1 Chron. **xxix.** 12.

And in reference to this creature, bearing so clearly the signature of his Great Proprietor, shall we not say, "Render to God the things that are God's?" Are not all the powers of man a tribute due to God—to be employed indeed for the uses He has appointed in the service of man, but to be ascribed and devoted to Him who gave them? And who sees not an infinite difference between the claims of earthly monarchs to the impost they demand and those of our heavenly King? For though the coin we use in our mutual transactions bear the impress of the sovereign, it is really the property of the subject, since he obtains it from the mint, or from any hand through which it passes, only in exchange for an equivalent. And though the reception of it be an acknowledgment of allegiance, involving an obligation to pay the tribute due, still it is but a small portion that can be fitly exacted of him on this score; and what he pays, he pays out of what is previously his own. But in reference to God, what is there that we have not received? What equivalent have we ever given Him for His gifts? Our industry, skill, perseverance, by means of which we acquire property as it respects man, are themselves the offspring of His gifts, as well as all the materials on which we exercise them. Look around on all thy talents and all thy stores: what is there thou hast not received? What canst thou offer to God of which it must not be said, "Of thine own have we given unto thee?"

And is there any limit to the obligation of the creature to the Creator, who gave him being, in whom he lives and moves? To "love Him with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength," seems the first law of nature, the obvious

inalienable duty of every rational being : but it is what we have never yet done, though in this lies the glory and perfection of our nature. Who is to make up this deficiency for us, and bring us back to our right position and standard? Alas, the remedy, we know, lies only with our Great *High Priest*, Deliverer, and Restorer ! And what have we that we would withhold from Him ? Let *Cæsar* have his due, “not for wrath but for conscience’ sake.” “Good measure, shaken together and running over,” expresses the good man’s bounty to the cause and objects he approves ; and not scrupulous or tenacious of the world’s baubles, he yields these where they give delight—gives the coat with the cloak, and adds self-denying exertions to frank liberality. But *Cæsar* must not intrude into the domain of conscience, firm and unflinching in his allegiance to the Supreme Ruler ; must not presume to be his director in spiritual things, or demand from him compliance and conformity in matters pertaining to the jurisdiction of a higher Lord. We know the world’s usurpations, the conflict the Church has ever had with its Pharaohs and its *Cæsars*, its Emperors and its Popes, for liberty to serve God according to His commandment, for leave to be let alone in the humble sphere of honest exemplary citizenship and Christianity. We know how signally, from time to time, the crown of martyrdom has been the trophy won by Christ’s conquerors, the victims of their persecution ; and how the cause of civil liberty, of pure morals, and advanced civilisation have followed in the wake of those glorious struggles maintained by men who had more than life to contend for, a higher stake than all the world’s treasury to win or lose. Let us, my friends, be faithful in all points to our heavenly

King ; and the State will have good subjects in us, the city where we dwell honest citizens, the Church and families to which we belong true and honourable members.

In reference to the important duty that this day lies on some of my present audience—I mean the election and appointment of the magistrates and civic rulers of this city, and the consequent obligations resting on them and on us, allow me to remark that the office of magistrates and rulers, being God's ordinance, is impressed with His image and superscription. They are His ministers, consecrated to this peculiar branch of service. The authority attached to the office, being derived from above, must be used for Him from whom it flows. Not an inherent power but a delegated trust, it must be exercised in subservience to the intention of the original Dispenser of all power. A temporary commission, to be followed by exact investigation of the manner of its discharge, it needs be executed with a constant reference to Him who is our Omniscient Witness and Righteous Judge. How should this solemn thought cast down every emotion of pride and assumption of superiority connected with office, and awaken only awe of the Supreme Ruler, and of the responsibility imposed on those who bear His commission—with an anxious concern to be wanting in nothing that fidelity and uprightness demand!

The trust is weighty, in that the interests of the community are involved in it. For the magistrates' office bears the superscription of God, not so much in its authority, as in the end of its appointment—which is, not personal aggrandisement, or family interest, or partial and party views, but the good of the community. "He is the minister of

God," says the apostle, "to thee for good; for rulers are not a terror," that is, are not designed of God to be a terror, "to good works, but to the evil." Their office is appointed for the protection of the people, in person, property, and rights; and for the prevention and punishment of those offences that would injure these. Accordingly, the apostle exhorts that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings, and for all in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Nor can I forbear remarking that, as the meaning of these words, *godliness and honesty*, is weighty, so their collocation is observable. *Godliness*, placed first, is the best foundation for honesty—genuine religion the best basis of morality; "the *fear of the Lord* is the *beginning*" and first principle of all practical wisdom. Everything that promotes true religion is directly and essentially subservient to pure morals; for our holy faith not only inculcates but necessarily gives rise to "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report." And, therefore, to foster and promote the interests of true religion by a judicious exercise of the important function of presenting well-endowed and truly *gospel* ministers to the churches placed under your patronage; by providing suitable places of worship, and giving access to these on easy terms, that the "gospel may be preached to the poor;" by guarding the sanctity of the Lord's-day; in fine, by the persuasive argument of good example—these are duties of paramount importance, and indispensably incumbent on those who hold office in this community.

This zeal for godliness will necessarily be combined with a

corresponding zeal for *honesty*; that is, for all that is upright, honourable, and becoming in conduct. With this view, the faithful magistrate will use all prudent and vigilant measures for suppressing injustice, turbulence, licentiousness, and especially drunkenness, the disgrace of our country, and the prolific root of its degeneracy, with everything that invades the quiet and peace of society;—and while severe in repressing evil, he will remember that he is appointed *the minister of God for good*. His generous aim will be to do all the good he can to the society in which he holds so honourable a place. As far as his influence extends, he will patronise and assist the education of the poor, will promote the diffusion of useful knowledge, of art, industry, economy: and, as the community over which he presides rises in intelligence and public spirit, instead of wishing to uphold a monopoly of exclusive advantages, he will rejoice in communicating them. His aim will rather be to have all qualified for the exercise of equal rights and liberties, and advanced to a full participation and enjoyment of those civil, political, and religious privileges which are the badge of free-men; and which, while they endear the State to those placed under its protection, provide for it, in return, its best defence and security in the enlightened affection and merited approbation of the people.*

Now may God, the Ruler of kingdoms, preserve to all ages, and improve and perfect, whatever is good and right in that happy constitution of government that forms the rich inherit-

* This election of Magistrates took place before the extension of the franchise, when Edinburgh returned but one member, and the constituency was confined to the Magistrates and Town Council—thirty-three in number.

ance of our highly favoured land ! And for us now present, may He establish His kingdom of righteousness and peace in our hearts, teaching us to be faithful in all things, and to serve our generation according to His will, that we may at last receive His approving testimony, and be found meet to enter into the joy of the Lord !

XXI.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

[The following discourse formed one of a series of lectures by different individuals, relating to the Jews ; and, being called for in haste, was prepared by means of the ready assistance of the writers referred to in it. It describes a very remarkable event, fulfilling the express predictions of our Saviour, along with those of Moses in ancient times, winding up one period of the Church's history, and opening a glimpse into its onward destination. A scene of suffering, so striking in itself and remarkable in its consequences, will commend itself to the attention of young people, and of serious readers of the Bible of all classes, though not extending their researches far in general history.]

“And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here ! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings ? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”—MARK xiii. 1, 2.

It is interesting to mark the site and trace the history of edifices built for God, some of which have been signally honoured by Him, and granted a continuance embracing a long portion of the Church's duration. The temple at Jerusalem was one of these ; it was designed by David, and perfected in all its splendour by his illustrious successor. Stationed, perhaps, on or near the spot where “the king of Salem, priest of the most high God,” many centuries before, had blessed the progenitor of the chosen people, that temple won for Jerusalem the title of “the joy of the whole earth,”

and, more than all its other seats and palaces, endeared the chosen city to the hearts of its inhabitants.

It stood contemporary with great events, and was the scene, for four hundred years, of the perpetual sacrifices, the august national solemnities, the divinely-appointed services that distinguished the worship of the God of Israel. *There* it was that the assembled nation, congregated in all its tribes, beheld the glory of the Lord when, acknowledging the supplications of Solomon and the homage of His devoted people, He assumed His dwelling in the place they had prepared for Him, and blessed their labours with the manifestation of His glorious presence. *There* a race of honoured kings, a succession of holy prophets, held their sacred festivals, paid their vows, and made their solemn offerings. *There* it was that Hezekiah restored the degenerated Church, and renewed the neglected ordinances. *There*, we presume, the seraphic Isaiah beheld the Lord on His elevated throne when His train filled the temple; *that* was the house, the posts of whose doors moved at the voice of Him who spoke, and that was filled with smoke, evolved from no earthly flame, when the prophet's lips were consecrated for their sacred commission.

But that which piety erects, sin often lays in ruins. This edifice accomplished its appointed period of service, and shared in the national fall, when the people by whom it had been profaned were carried to their seventy years' captivity. The second temple was designated to still higher distinction, inasmuch as it was that which Messiah's feet trod, and within whose walls he joined as a worshipper.* It owed its erec-

* Hag. ii. 9; Mal. iii. 1.

tion to Zerubbabel, who, with great labour and heroic enterprise, raised its walls in troublous times, about five hundred and twenty years before the Christian era. That structure, repaired at different times, and to a great extent renewed by Herod, surnamed the Great, who embellished it with much magnificence, continued the central station of the true Church, and the place of its authorised worship, till the time when salvation was proclaimed to the ends of the earth; and the elected people, stript of their forfeited privileges and cast off from the land of their inheritance, became aliens and fugitives, scattered to every region of the globe.

Great revolutions, terminating in the overthrow of cities and states, are usually the result of many causes of combined and often lengthened operation. Our Lord enumerates many circumstances and events, arising partly from the character and conduct of the Jews, partly from the special providence of God, that were signs and prognostics, or occasions and means, of their destruction, even as the distant thunder forebodes and introduces the coming storm. For example, he specifies, first, *the appearance of false Christs*, or Messiahs; secondly, *wars and commotions*, "nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; thirdly, "*famines and pestilences*;" fourthly, "*earthquakes in divers places*;" fifthly, "*fearful sights and signs from heaven*;"* sixthly,

* "The history of the Jewish wars by Josephus seems to be a commentary upon the prophecies of Christ. Josephus, among other particulars, gives a distinct account of 'the fearful sights and great signs from heaven' which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, and Tacitus has confirmed the narration of Josephus. If Christ had not expressly foretold this, many who give little heed to portents, and who know that historians have been too credulous in that point, would have suspected that Josephus exaggerated, and that Tacitus was misinformed; but as

"the persecution of the Christians;" seventhly, "*the preaching of the gospel throughout the then known world.*" All those things came to pass, and are recorded both by Jewish and heathen historians, particularly by the celebrated Josephus. But we will not detain you by a particular illustration of these events. Proceeding to the catastrophe itself, we find Titus* investing Jerusalem, in the spring of the year 70, with an army of between thirty and forty thousand men, aided by a large body of allies. The city is supposed to have contained at this time more than two million five hundred thousand souls, of whom many had taken refuge in it from the Roman sword, while multitudes had come up from all parts of Judea to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. The place was strong both by nature and by art, being built upon hills, and surrounded by a triple wall, with a hundred and sixty-four towers of solid masonry, except on those parts which were protected by deep valleys, where one wall was a sufficient defence—the whole forming a circuit of nearly four miles and a-half. The temple, built on Mount Moriah, was itself a stronghold, and was defended by a lofty fort called *Antonia*. The palace, also, on Mount Zion, was a place of strength. Ammunition and provisions had been laid up in great abundance; the cisterns provided for the supply of the temple furnished a sufficiency of water, and subterranean passages kept open an occasional intercourse with the country. The city might well be accounted impregnable, since not the men only, but the women and children, fought with a desperation inspired the testimonies of Josephus and Tacitus confirm the predictions of Christ, so the predictions of Christ confirm the wonders recorded by these historians."—*Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i. p. 209.

* Basnage's *History of the Jews*, p. 56. Folio, 1708.

equally by abhorrence of the Roman yoke, and by an infatuated but confident expectation of the miraculous interposition of Heaven in their behalf. Titus, therefore, hopeless of carrying it by assault, "*cast a trench about it*," and built a wall nearly nine miles in extent, with thirteen towers, so enclosing it on every side as to cut off all communication and all transference of persons or supplies.

The wretchedness of such a situation, affecting so vast an assemblage of human beings, is incalculable: yet the miseries inflicted by the enemy were as nothing compared with those which the besieged inflicted on themselves. "Within the city," according to Josephus, whose statements are collected and arranged by the learned and accurate Hartwell Horne,* "the fury of the opposite factions filled all places, even the temple itself, with continual slaughters. Nay, to such a height did their madness rise, that they destroyed the very granaries of corn which should have sustained them, and burnt the magazines of arms which should have defended them. By this means, when the siege had lasted only two months, the famine began to rage, and at length reduced them to such straits, that the barbarities which they practised are not to be imagined. All the reverence due to age, and the sacred ties of parent and child, were annihilated. Children snatched the half-baked morsels which their fathers were eating, and mothers even snatched the food out of their children's mouths. As the siege advanced, the ravages of the famine increased, and devoured the people by whole houses and families: the upper rooms were filled with women and children, who were dying by famine, and the lanes of the

* Horne's Introduction, vol. i. p. 627.

city were full of the dead bodies of the aged. The children, also, and the young men, wandered about the market-places like shadows, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them. If any one was suspected of concealing human food—and the sense of smell had become wonderfully acute to detect such concealment—he was an object, not of envy only, but rather of indignant execration. “At length the famine became so extreme that they gladly devoured what the most sordid animals refused to touch.” The historian relates, as a thing unheard of before and almost incredible, yet as only illustrative of the desperate circumstances of the people at large, that “a woman of distinguished rank, who had been stripped and plundered of all her goods and provisions by the soldiers, in hunger, rage, and despair, killed and roasted her sucking child, and had eaten one-half of him before the horrid deed was discovered.”* During the siege many hundreds, who were taken by the Romans, were first whipped, then tortured, and finally crucified: the Roman soldiers nailing them, one after one way, and another after another, to crosses, by way of jest—until at length the multitude became so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses for the bodies. Thus terribly was their imprecation fulfilled: “His blood be on us and on our children.”†

It is said that one hundred and fifteen thousand, who were starved to death, were buried;‡ but that six hundred thousand bodies of the poor were thrown out of the gates.§ In

* See Deut. xxviii. 49–68.

† Josephus, quoted by Horne, Introduction, vol. i. p. 627. Fifth Edition.

‡ Basnage, p. 57.

§ Josephus' Works, p. 629. Folio, 1794. These numbers appear incredibly great, yet our Lord's emphatic assertion (Matt. xxiv. 21), “There shall be

the course of the siege it is computed that eleven hundred thousand perished. At length, after a siege of four months, from April to August, Titus, having got possession of the tower of Antonia, proceeded to attack the city and *the temple*. This celebrated structure he was exceedingly desirous to preserve as a memorial of the victory, and "protested to the Jews, who had fortified themselves within it, that he would preserve it even against their will." He had expressed the like desire of preserving *the city*, too, and repeatedly sent Josephus and other Jews to their countrymen, to persuade them to a surrender. But an overruling Providence directed things otherwise. The Jews themselves first set fire to the porticos of the temple, and then the Romans. One of the soldiers, neither waiting for any command, nor trembling for such an attempt, but urged, says the historian, "by a certain divine impulse, threw a burning brand in at the golden window, and thereby set fire to the buildings of the temple itself. Titus ran immediately to the temple, and commanded his soldiers to extinguish the flames. But neither exhortations nor threatenings could restrain their violence." When night arrived, "a soldier in the dark set fire to the door; and thus, as Josephus says, the temple was burnt against the will of Cæsar." * Finally, Titus gave orders to demolish the foundations of the city and temple, leaving only three towers standing, as monuments of the strength of the place, and a part of the wall as a rampart for a garrison. It is related that Terentius Rufus, an officer of Titus, tore up with a plough-

great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be," may prepare us to give credit to accounts which, in all ordinary cases, might be held incredible. The truth of the prediction, however, is in no way dependent on the accuracy of these details.

* Horne, vol. i. p. 629.

share the foundations of the temple ; thus remarkably fulfilling the words of the prophet Micah (iii. 12), "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps." Well might Josephus introduce an aged Jew as saying to his countrymen, "What is become of our city, which was believed to be inhabited by God? It is rooted up from the very foundations, and the only monument of it that is left is the camp of those who destroyed it still pitched upon its remains."* From that time to this, all the efforts of the Jews to recover their city have been vain : and vain was the impious attempt of Julian to rebuild their temple with the view of casting discredit on the Word of Prophecy. "The city has remained for the most part in a state of desolation, and has never been under the government of the Jews themselves, but oppressed and broken down by a succession of foreign masters, the Romans, the Saracens, the Franks, the Mamelukes, and lastly by the Turks, to whom it is still subject."†

We proceed to ask, *What have been the bearings of this event, the destruction of Jerusalem, upon Christianity on the one hand, and Judaism on the other?* To the former part of this question our answer shall be brief. First, this event furnished *a most striking proof of the truth of our Lord's predictions*, and consequently of *His Divine mission and authority*. For the predictions were simple, express, emphatic, relating to a great variety and succession of circumstances and events, which no human wisdom could have anticipated, and many of which were exceedingly unlikely. For example : "At the time when our Lord spoke," as is

* Newton's Dissertations.

† Horne, vol. iii. p. 23.

remarked by Dr Jortin, "the Roman governor resided in Jerusalem, and had troops there sufficient to keep it in obedience; whence it was probable that Jerusalem would have continued in quiet subjection to the Romans, whatever trouble might be raised in other parts of Judea." Even in the event of war, the temple was a building so magnificent and so much admired, that "it was natural to expect that the Romans, according to their usual custom in their conquests, would endeavour to preserve it safe and entire." We have seen, accordingly, that "Titus laboured with all his power to save it, but that his soldiers, as if moved by a divine impulse, would not hearken to his orders, but set fire to it, and that afterwards the ground on which it stood was ploughed up, so that not one stone was left upon another." "This prophecy was pronounced by Christ nearly forty years, and recorded by St Matthew nearly thirty years, before the event. And for the literal accomplishment, we have the testimony of the historian so often mentioned; who was himself a general on the side of the Jews in the beginning of the war, afterwards a prisoner at large in the Roman army; a party deeply concerned" in the whole progress of affairs, and "an eye-witness" of the event; "a Jew, moreover, by religion, and a priest, and therefore not to be suspected of partial testimony."* Each succeeding age has added its seal to the truth of the predictions, by carrying forward the series of events in which they are fulfilled. To this day the Jews, scattered among all nations but not lost, persecuted but not destroyed, stand forth a sign and a wonder, and a witness to all people of the truth and Divine inspiration of the prophetic

* Jortin's Discourses on Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. pp. 205-207, notes.

declarations both of Moses and of Christ respecting them : examples, for a destined period, of Divine judgment, for their rejection of the Messiah, but reserved, by a special providence, for those future brighter destinies which are also unequivocally announced in the Word of Revelation.

Further, The destruction of Jerusalem served a most important purpose, in reference to Christianity, *by liberalising the minds of the believers*, and particularly *by emancipating the Jewish converts from the authority of the Mosaic ritual*. For while the temple stood, the rites of Judaism still solicited their observance, and seem to have been permitted or sanctioned, in condescension to their national predilections, by the apostles. St Paul himself, however zealous for the protection of the Gentiles from Jewish impositions, yet, wishing to have Timothy for his companion, "*took him and circumcised him,*"* his mother being a Jewess and a believer : and this he did "*because of the Jews* which were in these quarters," that is, to avert their prejudices ; "for they knew all that his father was a Greek." The same apostle complied with the counsel of James and the elders at Jerusalem, to unite with four men that had a vow, and he "purified himself with them, and entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days, and that an offering should be offered for every one of them." But the destruction of the temple released the Jewish believers from the last links of their chain, intimating, in language not to be mistaken by them, that the obligations of the Jewish law were at an end.

Once more, The destruction of Jerusalem, by weaning the believing Hebrews from their national attachments, and

* Acts xvi. 3.

scattering them abroad in the earth, contributed essentially to the diffusion of the knowledge and influence of the gospel. Admonished by the Lord to escape out of the city when they should see it compassed with armies, and to flee to the mountains, the disciples made their escape; for the Roman armies with their standards—"the abomination of desolation, standing where it ought not"—after first approaching the city, were, by a singular providence, repeatedly withdrawn; and the Christians, fleeing to the mountains, found shelter in Pella and other places in the hill country. Afterwards they felt little regret in quitting a land which had now lost its chief attraction; and rejoiced in identifying themselves more thoroughly and cordially with their Gentile brethren, with whom they united in preaching the word, not to Jews only, but also to Greeks, yea, to "barbarian, Scythian, bond and free." Thus did this event serve *for the furtherance of the gospel.*

But *what are its bearings upon Judaism?* To this part of the subject, could I gain their ear, I would specially invite the attention of the descendants of Abraham. And that I may not be accused of dogmatic assertion, I shall present *two leading aspects of the case*, not in the form of doctrinal propositions, but in that of *questions* demanding a serious and candid investigation. These questions are, *Whether the destruction of Jerusalem, with all the miseries that accompanied and followed it, was not a national judgment inflicted by a righteous God in punishment of the rejection of Christ and His gospel?* and *Whether this event was not a Divine intimation of the final abolition of the Mosaic economy?*

I ask, first, *Whether the destruction of Jerusalem and the*

dispersion of the Jews is not to be regarded as an act of righteous judgment upon the nation, incurred by the dreadful crime of rejecting the promised Messiah? The event itself was emphatically described by Him who speaks in the chapter before us as "great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world until that time:" and the Jewish historian—in words that seem almost borrowed from the prophecy, which yet it is probable he had never seen and certainly could not intend to acknowledge—says: "Our city, of all those which have been subjected to the Romans, was advanced to the highest felicity, and was thrust down again to the extremest misery; for if the misfortunes of all from the beginning of the world were compared with those of the Jews, they would appear much inferior upon the comparison." And again: "To speak in brief; no other city ever suffered such things, as no other generation from the beginning of the world was ever more fruitful of wickedness." * The Jews themselves admit that their sufferings were the punishment of their sins. The same historian, in entering upon the subject of the destruction of the city and temple, declares of his countrymen, "that he never heard of so wicked a nation, and that, if the Romans had deferred the siege, either the earth had opened to swallow them up alive, or fire had come down from heaven, as it did on Sodom, to consume them to ashes." † But *was there no particular sin, no pre-eminent crime*, that thus aroused the thunderbolts of Divine indignation? What might it be? Was it *idolatry*? This sin greatly prevailed in earlier times, and met with a fearful punishment by the sword and oppression of the Chal-

* Newton's Dissertations.

† Baanage, p. 53.

deans ; but, checked by the captivity in Babylon, it never again reared its head. Was it *the profanation of God's name* and of *His Sabbath*? Was it *sensuality*, or *treachery*, or *deceit*, or *injustice*? All these sins had abounded in former times, and had been met with sharp rebukes and with severe chastisements, but with no judgments deserving to be compared for a moment with the deluge of wrath that now swept them away. Their punishment, being without a parallel in the history of nations, must have been the consequence of some *unparalleled crime*: and what crime can you fix upon to which it is so reasonable to impute it as that with which St Peter charged their fathers, that "with wicked hands they killed the Prince of life," that they "crucified and slew the Lord of glory!" Here we find a complete solution of the mystery. This act, that seemed to adopt and consummate all the crimes of their fathers, sanctioned alike by the rulers and the people, and persisted in by their obstinate rejection of God's own testimony so articulately given in the resurrection of Christ and in the gift of the Holy Ghost, shut them up to judicial impenitence and inevitable ruin. This forfeited all their privileges; for it was an act of treason against the covenant of their God, being the rejection of that very Messiah to whom their whole institution looked as its scope and end, and in whom it centred and received its consummation. And while it forfeited the Divine protection and proclaimed them the enemies of the Most High, it served also to sear their consciences, to yield them the prey of sin and Satan, and to prepare them for every act of wickedness, profligacy, and desperation. "This is the heir," said the wicked husbandmen; "come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." Can we

wonder that "the Lord of the vineyard should miserably destroy these wicked men, and let out His vineyard to other husbandmen?" "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? and whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder!*"

And, my brethren, if the Jews, by rejecting Christ as a nation, were themselves rejected *as a nation*, it is no less certain that we ourselves, if we reject Him as individuals, must *individually* perish—perish under a judgment still more dreadful than that which temporally overwhelmed Jerusalem, because of a more spiritual, personal, and final nature. For, if *in the day of Jerusalem's judgment* the despairing sufferers "called on the rocks to fall on them, and the mountains to cover them," what shall be the terror of the unbelieving and disobedient *in the great day of the Lord*, when Christ shall come in glory, "taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord?" "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Secondly, I ask whether the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple was not *a clear intimation of the final abolition of the Mosaic economy?* For Jerusalem was the holy city which the Lord had chosen for Himself; and the temple was the centre of the worship and ceremonies, of the distinctions and privileges of the Jews. *There only* could the high

priest offer sacrifices for sin : *there only* could he enter into the holy of holies to sprinkle the blood upon the mercy-seat : *there only* could he come forth from the presence of Jehovah to bless the people. The whole dispensation, being a ministration of shadows and ceremonies, naturally came to an end when these shadows were withdrawn, and these ceremonies could no longer be observed. "Sacrifices, in particular, constituting the substance of their national religion, that religion could not be said to subsist longer than the continuance of their celebration. But sacrifices could be performed only in the temple, so that when this was finally destroyed, the institution itself became abolished."* In the first captivity there had been a suspension of these services, yet only a partial and temporary one, and their place had been supplied by continued prophetic communications ; but now the overthrow was entire, unmitigated, irreparable. This visitation has not been seventy years of partial desertion merely, while the poor of the people remained in Judah and Jerusalem, and while Daniel in Babylon was the acknowledged prophet of Jehovah, extending His fame over that vast and powerful empire, but has proved to be now nearly eighteen centuries of banishment and desertion, for a great part of which time no Jew was permitted to enter or approach the city, while during the whole period no light has shone from heaven to relieve the gloom, nor voice of inspiration has been heard. The temple was utterly destroyed, so that not one stone remained upon another—that temple, too, of which Jehovah had declared, by the prophet Haggai, that its glory should exceed that of Solomon's, that there "the Desire of all nations should

* Warburton's Julian, p. 6.

come," and that there He would "give peace." How, I ask, *can* this prediction be fulfilled if Jesus was not the Messiah, the Desire of nations? For the temple is no more. Either the prophecy has failed, or Jesus is the Christ. And where is the office of the high priest, when there is no temple at which to sacrifice, no holy of holies to enter, no mercy-seat to sprinkle with the atoning blood? Where is the sinner's hope, when the altar for sin-offering is no more? Where are the privileges of the Jewish people, when the city of their solemnities, the sole sacred resort of their tribes, is levelled with the ground? Was it not a law of standing obligation, to be observed in all their generations, that the males of Israel should assemble three times a-year at Jerusalem to celebrate the appointed feasts—a law that continued to be recognised and observed in all periods of the Jewish economy? *Can* that law be now obeyed? Has not God cancelled it by rendering the observance of it impossible? All the peculiarities of that dispensation were at an end when the land given to the fathers was finally wrested from their descendants, and the various ordinances that were to be observed there, and *only there*, became impracticable, and therefore extinct. In the abolition of the temple service, and in the dispersion of the Jews, the voice of Heaven proclaims aloud, that the shadows of things to come have fled away, and given place to the things themselves, those substantial blessings that are not confined to any place or nation. This abolition of Judaism by the destruction of its *centre of vitality*, the *temple*, is beautifully illustrated by St Chrysostom, quoted by Bishop Warburton. "By the *necessity*," says he, "of a local worship, God covertly withdrew the Jews from the rage of ritual observances,"—

that is, a local worship being prescribed as an essential character of their religion, yet being now impracticable, this admonished the Jews to forego their zeal for their ritual observances,—“for as a physician, by breaking the cup, prevents his patient from indulging his appetite in a hurtful draught, so God withheld them from their sacrifices by destroying the city itself, and making the place inaccessible to all of them.”*

Awake, then, descendants of Abraham, disciples of Moses, why will ye not “look to the end of that which is now abolished?” We ask you not to forsake Moses and the prophets, but to come, in company with them, to Him of whom they all spake; for they “all testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” Come, and you will find Moses and Elias attendant upon Jesus. Come, and you will exchange the terrors of Sinai for the blessings of Zion. In the very ruins of the earthly Jerusalem you will find a salutary memorial, not only of the transitory character of all this world’s glory, but of the exchange of the shadow for the substance; of the introduction of that kingdom which is not of this world, and of that temple, built upon everlasting foundations, in which all believers are living stones, fashioned after the model of “the chief corner stone,” even Jesus Christ. “The sun” of the Jewish theocracy, it is true, “is darkened,” and “the moon” of the Jewish Church “no longer gives light;” “the stars” of the Jewish priesthood “are fallen,” and “the powers of the” Jewish “heavens,” the authorities, civil and ecclesiastical, occupying high places, “are shaken” and overthrown:

* Warburton’s Julian, p. 9.

but behold a brighter sun, even "the Sun of righteousness;" behold a fairer moon, even the Church of Christ; behold more favoured stars, held in the right hand of the Redeemer; and authorities and powers of a higher order, stationed in the mystical heaven of the gospel Church, exercising rule in the kingdom of our God and His Christ. Let not the efforts now making for your salvation be repelled and despised by you; but yield to the testimony of truth, to the invitation of love; come and share in heavenly blessings. "*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*" Your "holy cities are a wilderness; Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Your holy and your beautiful house, where your fathers praised the Lord, is burned up with fire, and all your pleasant things are laid waste." To this day, according to the prediction of the prophet Hosea, you "abide without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice;" and Jerusalem, we are assured, "*shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*"

But this last declaration limits the threatening, and intimates a period when it shall be recalled. There is hope concerning Israel; for Hosea, in continuation of the former prediction, says: "*Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.*" Let this assurance animate our efforts and our prayers in their behalf. The era of their *return* shall be an era of light and joy to the Church and to the world; "for if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness! If the casting away of them be the reconciling

of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

To all of you, my brethren, whether of Jewish or of Gentile origin, I say, See that you yourselves be found in Christ,—that you be of “the living in Jerusalem;” see that you be built upon “the foundation laid in Zion,”—that you be “living stones” in that spiritual building of which not one stone shall be lost or displaced for ever, that finally you may be “pillars in the temple of God, and go no more out.”

XXII.

TIMES OF TRIAL TIMES OF SELF-INSPECTION.

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 22D
MAY 1845, IN RESIGNING THE MODERATOR'S CHAIR,
TWO YEARS AFTER THE DISRUPTION.

"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."—2 JOHN 8.

THESE are the words of one venerable in years, mature in experience and wisdom, strong in faith—one in whom love of the Saviour, of the truth, and of those imbued with its spirit, had subdued and absorbed all the impulses of human passion. His love is for what Christ loves; his indignation and resentment—and he can feel these—are directed solely against what Christ condemns, namely, against Antichrist, unbelief, false doctrine—against those who refuse and who set themselves to oppose and resist the truth.

In the midst of kind approval and encouragement to the faithful disciples whom he addresses, there is an emphatic earnestness in his words, importing the risk of sustaining loss, suggesting that their attainments were the fruit of labour, the reward corresponding with the effort, and proportionably impaired by any falling off. How tenderly does

he identify himself with his converts, as a father with his children, who feels his interests bound up with theirs ; his endeavours being defeated, his wealth, his property, his object in life taken from him, if they incur dishonour, or do not live to be partakers of his good name and prosperous fortune ! “ Look to yourselves,” he says, “ that *we* lose not the things that we have wrought.” How precious to a minister are the souls he is instrumental in drawing to the Saviour ! How rejoiced over for themselves, and for Jesus’ sake ! How valued as tokens of the acceptance of his labour in the Lord, as answers to the most express and fervent of his prayers !

God is sovereign in this work, employing sometimes weak and inferior instruments, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God. Some start far ahead of those who were their teachers—as Samuel trained up by Eli, and Paul drawn from the school of Gamaliel. Some, endowed for a peculiar mission, stand prominently forward from the age that produced them, like Elias and John Baptist. Such are remarkable cases ; but when we consider how much ministers have the forming of those they teach, how readily the people frame themselves to their standard of opinion and attainment, how the future race of teachers is fashioned on the model of those who went before, especially of those who are eminent—how *their* sentiments are imbibed and transmitted, how *their* proceedings in times of pressure will be quoted as precedents in times of tranquillity, how even their errors and mistakes, if they are allowed to make them, are stereotyped and embodied in their rules—does not the responsibility seem solemn and oppressive ? Must we not exclaim, “ Who is sufficient for these things ? ” and are not

those who are called to public and important duties, having much depending on them, entitled to the higher honour, and standing in need of peculiar grace, should they not be upheld by unceasing prayer?

We have to guard against the stupor and slackness that are apt to overtake us after effort, ere our resting time is come, and may hail it as a benefit to be quickened by whatever means—shaken out of slumber, impoverished, thrown from vessel to vessel—to have our commission again renewed to us, with a revival of the first works and the first love.

My text would have led me, on a common occasion, to consider the causes and symptoms of religious declension, with the consequent danger, and the remedies to be applied. But at this time I must forego these subjects to offer a few practical suggestions bearing on *our present position as a Christian community*, the *attainments* we have made, the *dangers* we are exposed to, and the *duties* that devolve upon us in reference to the Redeemer's cause in the world.

Our peculiar circumstances, as a Church, certainly urge on us, above most, the call to "look to ourselves." The Lord has done great things for us, loosening us from our old dependencies, placing us in an untried situation, summoning our attention to the operation of His hands, and holding us engaged to His cause as He shall further indicate His will and open the path before us. If what has taken place had been prophesied to us ten years ago, we should hardly have believed in it, and still less perhaps, in the ease and simplicity with which the hand of Providence has brought about so important a change. We did not see that the improvements which we were prosecuting were to land us in so

altered a position—altogether freer from embarrassment, and more fraught with the spirit of progress and perfection than that to which we aspired. Less would have satisfied our wishes in a spiritual way than what the Lord was providing for us. We were attached to our ecclesiastical system, with its advantages and faults, and to our relative places and associations, by ties like those that bind us to our temporal existence, and we scarcely thought of the dissolution of the one but with the other. But we were led in a way that we knew not, and came naturally, without seeking for it, to the issue in which we stand. We have much, much to be thankful for in the overruling care that has presided over us—in what has been granted, but still more, as I earnestly hope, in what has been denied. We are answered according to the purport of our prayers, if not according to their express tenor. And what matter of thankfulness, that we are as present circumstances find us, rather than as we might have been—that we have not the eighteenth century, with its spiritual impotence and torpor, to languish through a second time—that we are not entangled in any half-measure, such as duty might have enjoined us to accept, that would have bound up the zeal and limited the views which have now such large and exhilarating scope! We have come to a point in the Church's history when great things are to be accomplished, in order to which great changes must needs take place. God prepares Himself instruments of which He only knows the destination; the occasion forms the character and is necessary for its development.

Among *encouragements* for a vigorous prosecution of our work, we cannot but notice the evidences of God's help in the

success beyond our hopes that has already prospered our endeavours. We felt that the pressure of a great cause lay upon us, the fulfilment of a great *duty*; or, if it were not a duty, the perpetration of a great error, a sin against the Church of Christ, our country, our children, and ourselves. The question demanded a personal decision from each of us. It was of the last importance that we should act rightly. Many can bear witness to the anxiety that attended the question, the heart-searching, the spreading the matter before the Lord, the earnest longing, the importunate waiting for direction. Without knowing, for a long time, to what extent our brethren would be of the same mind with us, or how far public opinion would bear us out in our decision, we felt that the path of safety for us was to withdraw in silence rather than be instrumental in our Church's misfortune, or give our consent that she should be vitiated, degraded, and disqualified for her Master's work. Instantly on our decision we experienced *what relief* was in the escape we made; what enlargement of heart, what liberty of conscience, what mutual esteem, what peace, what strength, what joy and thankfulness. "Then was our heart filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing:" and with all the temporal loss, hardship, and apprehension that entered into the event, we would not reverse or change it again, with its feelings and good fruits, for years of our common existence.

And further, how manifest is the Lord's goodness in opening to us largely, and beyond our hopes, the hearts of the Christian people! It is a living principle, my brethren, that has been in operation, that has so loosened the world's hold on the heart, and laid its *mammon* at the foot of the cross.

Our Church has become dearer to all of us from the power we have acquired to do her service: our substance is so much the more precious that it is available for the work of the Lord. In languishing times we lean on an Establishment; in times of heart and revival the cause is its own supporter, and is safely entrusted to those whose affections are embarked in it. How could the Christian people have shewed their affection, if this first labour of love, that so unites them with their ministers, and so endears to them the cause of their Lord, had not opened before them? Endowments that help a weak Christianity have often helped to keep it weak. More glorious are the times when they are superseded by the vital energy of the gospel principle, established in the hearts of a faithful people. The worship of God is as our necessary bread: we are not so poor but that we have among us the means to obtain it, nor so destitute of charity as not to lend our aid to those who have not in this matter wherewith to help themselves.

The pleasant manses you have left, with their moderate competence, their cultivated gardens, and friendly neighbourhoods, had their charms. We have dwelt in peace under their shadow. They furnished to many a good man the sphere and the means of watching over the humble poor, and carrying the message of salvation into many families. Good has been done by their means in their time—a benefit that might have continued for ages to come, had God so willed it; but they have lasted their time, and for us no longer exist. And we have gained, as I said, by the loss. We have got a shove forward; we stand on higher ground; greater and better things are now required and expected from us. We are I trust, taken as a body, a more energetic, world-detached

community, in fuller readiness to attend the Master's call, than we were before. Those comfortable settlements were wont to be a hindrance, few being willing to leave Scotland in prosecution of foreign or missionary usefulness, who had the temptation of these inducements to remain at home. Stations in the colonies, or even in England, demanding more exertion with less emolument or temporal security, were held inferior, and fell frequently to the occupation of inferior or unpatronised men. Most returned from them with avidity to any settlement at home, while those here settled rarely broke through the ties that held them. This was the natural course of things. But a new impulse has been given: we are freer now for every service; and as our *Youth* are proverbially enterprising, and make the world the sphere of their exertions in every other line, we shall have them in this also, the willing carriers of glad tidings, the first cultivators of new and unfrequented fields.

And, my brethren, freed as we are from secular entanglements, let us be free also in heart and mind from every yoke of *narrowness, prejudice, and uncharitableness*. We have something yet to learn here: let us be Christ's scholars, watching His eye till He perfect us for His work, and may be pleased to give us an extended commission. We have nothing to do to judge others; and certainly shall lose nothing by the success of any who serve Christ in sincerity, as we desire to do. It becomes us to be candid and patient toward all men. We could not expect that all of our Church should see our question exactly as it appeared to us; or even that all should have resolution to act on any but a very clear conviction. Some have weaker, some stronger faith. Some

from natural, and some also from ties of Christian affection, worship where they did before, and bear us no unkindly feeling. As many of the instructed laity remain, so they are not unprovided with competent ministers: a proportion of these continue with them. No Church that holds so much of truth as that which we have left will be entirely bereft of witnesses. It remains for time to prove whether the Lord's work will revive or decline among them; while we, favoured with manifest expressions of His approbation, may trust the more surely that we have not mistaken our way, and may frankly leave others to His unerring judgment. What if we meet with obloquy and scorn from worldly professors,—if, in addition to hard words, cruel and oppressive acts of power have, in various cases, assailed us? could we expect it to be otherwise? We feel it hard to have the legal plea inequitably enforced against us, depriving us of our new Extension Churches, reared and occupied in such large proportion by those who are now our adherents. Yet can we wonder that such advantage should be taken by parties piqued and irritated by our separation from them? Their loss has been really great. Besides losing ministers in whose good name they gloried in common with others, the liberal and money-giving, if not the wealthier portion of their church community is withdrawn from them. They miss their faithful counselors in the pulpit, with much of the *salt* that gave vitality to the offerings of the flock; much of the spirit and power that upholds the honour of the Christian name in the eye of the world. They are conscious of a *loss*, and would suppose an *injury*, for which no forbearance on our part, or satisfaction they have in their own position, can atone. We owe them

some consideration and tenderness in this view for their share in their Church's misfortune. Our law enjoins that we do good as we have opportunity, and that prayer be made for all men. Let us fulfil our obligation with heart and good-will. And whatever treatment we receive, the sooner we ourselves are freed from all unkind resentment and feeling of alienation from such as may have acted honestly and consistently in this matter, the better.

For, in the review of past times, have we not seen *all reforms come to a stand*, either from *discord* and the prevalence of other influences over that of love among the reformers themselves, or from their *shutting themselves up among themselves*, and not adding *charity toward all* to the *brotherly kindness* that united them with their own party? The great, the properly called *Reformation* spread like the apostolic Christianity, while it combated only the works of the devil in the form of Popish corruptions: but how soon did it lose its spiritual power, or shrink within the limits of its early conquests, when it put on a secular form, intermingled in state politics, and used the weapons of its adversaries; or when, strenuous for party opinions, the bond of peace gave way to dissension among those who should have been wholly *one* in devotion to their cause! "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." "They that take the sword still perish by the sword." And even when the names are great and the cause good, as those that called Zuingle and Gustavus to the field of bloody conflict, they leave their object at last unattained, religion is lowered in its character, and the Church's interests are left worse embroiled than in the moment that called them into action.

The Methodists of the last century owed much of their useful success to the spirit of conciliation and brotherly esteem for others which they carried with them into their ordinary work. They did not start as opponents of the Church of England, but as its revivers. They went with the evangelical salutation, "Peace be unto you;" and have found their good-will responded to by many parties who did not agree well with each other. I trust we have begun upon this principle, and desire only that we cherish and abound in it more and more.

Next to these greatest calamities of discord and alienation, we must repel the inclination to delighting in ourselves and excluding others, to numbering adherents and drawing aside with them as apart and preferable. The world soon discerns its own spirit here, draws up on its part, and yields us no more spiritual conquests. Families and societies become arrayed and partitioned under the name of Free Church and non-Free Church, and may continue to go on for generations, as Papists and Protestants, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, have done in time past. No fresh inroad is made in this way on the enemy's territory; and the proselytes drawn from either side, being not converts to the truth but to party interests, are not won for the better. This is the devil's counterplot, the Antichrist against which we have to guard. The true antidote for it is *love of souls*, fervent charity toward all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and a desire, absorbing every other, to promote His reign everywhere, in all hearts, and over all the interests and confederacies of mankind.

The time in which our lot is cast, the experience of those

who have gone before us, and the progress made toward a certain defined issue and consummation of events, concur to impress these lessons on us, and to make the neglect of them in our case peculiarly culpable. We have the benefit of an advanced civilisation, of free institutions, and of good report among our brethren. There are none at this time permitted to set on us to hurt us, and if any speak ill of us or wish us harm, it belongs to us by perseverance in "well-doing, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." There is in our day a tendency to the breaking up of things that have long existed, a loosening of party opinions, a dissolving of old associations—opening a distant glimpse at that renovation and reorganisation for which the world groans, without a surmise of how the blessed consummation is to be brought about, or in what way the moral, intellectual, and political forces that are so restlessly at work can be made to bear upon it. The good we look for will not be wrought by man in his natural and civil capacities, nor by the wisdom of the flesh, but by the overruling power of Him whose purposes are secure of fulfilment. But it is of great moment that God's children, of various name and diverse association, should know one another in prospect of times of general turmoil and agitation. They stand allied by dearer ties than those of kindred and country. They have a cause common to *them* above all that leagues men in bonds of brotherhood and affinity. They have a work to do in the world peculiar to them, and prospects that outlive the crumbling destinies of state and empire. They must seek preparation for the part assigned them, and must know each other's thoughts, and strengthen each other's hands to do or to suffer. They are not alone in foreign

lands, for "the Lord hath in every city those that call upon His name." They are not on the losing side in the conflict of human affairs, for theirs is the cause that must ultimately triumph. Amid the shock of worldly elements, with distress of nations and perplexity, when "men's hearts fail them for fear," they are not overwhelmed or afraid with bewildered amazement, for they see the declared purposes of Jehovah ripening, and have skill to discern the operation of His hands. They know that their redemption draweth nigh, when the conflict thickens and God's discriminating judgments fall fast upon His adversaries. Though sharers in the common calamities, and tried with afflictions peculiar to them, though betrayed by those in whom they trusted, and some of them put to death, they have not the less confidence in the promise, "*There shall not an hair of your head perish,*" or courage for obeying the admonition, "*In patience possess ye your souls.*"

We know that strife must precede tranquillity, that it is not in quiet that the powers of darkness can be shaken and the great apostasy overthrown, that Christ's kingdom can supplant and break in pieces all the kingdoms of the earth. There are great structures to be demolished, mighty impediments to be removed, great things also to be done to prepare the way of the Lord. How remarkably does our Lord encourage His disciples, by the putting forth of the fig-tree, to be observant of the signs of the times, and instruct them, when they saw the terrible things predicted, to know that "the kingdom of God was nigh at hand." As His friends to whom He imparted His counsel, He admonishes them to "take heed to themselves, lest they should be overcharged with the

pleasures or cares of the world," and to "watch and pray always, that they might be accounted worthy to escape the things that were coming to pass, and to stand before the Son of man," forewarning them that "as a snare it should come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." Can we, my friends, be wrong in our time in applying this warning, in looking forward to events not less critical, to changes not less momentous, to a consummation as rapid and unlooked for, ushering in an era yet more glorious and remarkable?

They looked for the demolition of their polluted and rebellious city, the dispersion of their spared people, and of the faithful who, as good seed, were scattered through the earth, sowing it everywhere with the living word, and converting the Gentile nations. We, on our part, look forward to the excision and fall of the "*horns*" of the Roman empire, carrying down the great fabric of iniquity, clearing the spiritual heaven, and making way for a still more signal advent of Christ's power and kingdom, and of a fuller and more universal dissemination of the glad tidings throughout a wider world. The gospel in its first progress spread over and filled up the Roman world, but stopt short—being met and thrown back by the intermingling flood of barbarism and ignorance, out of which the subtle adversary constructed the physical frame-work of his new Babylon. It was so appointed that Christ's final universal triumph should not come but after "a falling away," and the revelation of "the man of sin" in a wide-spreading, destructive apostasy. We look back on the frightful progress of that new domination, on its engulfing power; we wonder at the feebleness of man, at the unchecked sway allowed to the arch-enemy who rules still in the hearts

of the children of disobedience. How often must they who lived before us, and we with them, have fainted in that long night of darkness, and since the time of the Church's revival, were it not for the Word of Prophecy assuring us that "God will bruise Satan under our feet shortly,"—that the term of conflict for each of us is short,—and that these things necessarily have an end, for "God is not slack concerning his promise!"

How much nearer are we to that end than our fathers of the Reformation! How much new encouragement is there to look up for the redemption that draweth nigh! And how gracious are the tokens that seem to indicate to *us* an advanced place in the progress of this redemption! It is for our interest at any time, but more especially *now*, to have our hearts detached from earthly things, to be steadfast in our work, prompt for every service at hand or afar. We, like Bethlehem-Ephratah, are little among the princes of the land, without influence or power in the arena of the world's politics—as we have experienced. We cannot cry loud enough to cause our voice to be heard in the streets of legislation. We have no weight to turn the scale, or bend the decisions of human councils; and so much the better, I would infer, is it for us. The Lord has separated us from the busy strife of secular interest and ambition that He may purify us for holier work. He has lightened us of purse and scrip, of the world's entangling possessions, that we might be readier to run at his bidding, willing to find a home or a grave in any country whither His service calls. If our land is of narrow bounds, and scatters wide its population; if our youth abound more in resources of mind and

education than of fortune ; if, by the course of events, a double band of labourers appear thrown into the home vineyard—may we not infer that other work is prepared for us, that God may design to call us to an advanced post among the world's evangelists, and to pour out on us, working with Him, a larger effusion of the spirit of zeal, devotedness, and sacrifice, than many of us have before experienced, or would have attained without the help of recent circumstances ? We cannot be wrong in making room in this way for his blessing ; in seeking at least all qualifications for usefulness, and leaving it to Him who determines all, to vindicate our cause, to make manifest the fruits of our righteousness, and to reconcile to us those of other communities by whom our principles are little understood.

Let me admonish our young friends, coming out on the stage of life's activity, to have their souls filled with these thoughts and aspirations,—that they consecrate themselves, withholding nothing from God,—that they care for nothing here but His service, His cause, His glory,—that they give every moment, every talent, every endeavour, so as may turn to best account in furthering His work within, in strengthening all they possess of means and ability for future usefulness. Grace and virtue according to the old measure is not enough for us now.

Assuming that we have gained a higher position as a Church, we require the means adequately to support it ; more abundant prayer, fuller communications of Divine influence, a larger access of converting grace, that would fill our churches with holy worshippers, purify our communion tables, and

raise the whole standard of our religious profession. Take us as a community, how poorly yet do we represent the "royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people," that Christ's followers ought to be in the world! How few among us can be pointed to as eminent for holiness, specially intimate in their communion with God, prosperous in their embassies to the throne of grace, enriching the Church with the benefits they bring down upon her! How little of that speaking piety which, among many holy, should mark the "fathers in Christ," diffusing itself through the atmosphere around, and shedding influence over all that come in contact with it! O that God would give us a day of Pentecost; would pour upon His servants and handmaidens the spirit of grace and supplication; would choose and call out to be His ministers those on whom Himself fixes the lot! We want greater simplicity of faith in the pulpit, stronger confidence in the word we preach as "the power of God unto salvation," a warmer sympathy also betwixt the pulpit and the pew—the moving spirit and responding heart giving witness to the word spoken.

Among hearers we have had too many loiterers, who, for want of the practice of what they know, fall back into unbelief. These deaden the ministry, tasking it with the charge of nursing a pallid appetite and stimulating decayed affections; requiring, besides the message which God addresses to his people, excitement for the intellect, and gratification for the taste. Better if these would stir themselves up to be profitable to others, teachers of babes, fellow-helpers with the ministry, and fruit-bearing branches in Christ. We have certainly already derived great advantages from the extended

number of our labourers. How many new-found hands are drawn out—men whom we did not know we possessed, whose worth lay hidden and unavailable to the Church. But we want still great accessions. Good, we trust, arises, and will farther extend, from the portioning out of the flock in our respective congregations among the elders and deacons, with a view to more intimate religious intercourse, more exact superintendence, and more particular knowledge of the state of individuals. Every soul has its history, and might find its fellow, were cases so known as we may suppose them to have been under the vigilant care of Richard Baxter of Kidderminster, and classed, it may be, secretly by the minister, as *careless* or *awakened*, as *serious* and *inquiring*, as *convicted of sin*, or as having attained *peace*, and making progress in *faith and holiness*. Our flocks much require this closer inspection—not to be brought about without labour, and the enlistment of many subordinate hands. Our larger congregations might be thrown into a kind of normal seminaries, where each one, at his post, should count for something, as *teacher* or as *taught*. None of our acknowledged members should be left to idleness, but employed, according to their qualifications, in classes for mutual improvement, in Sabbath-school teaching, in visiting the sick and the poor, and furthering improvement among the ignorant and neglected around them. Nothing is so healthful for the soul as useful occupation; no such effective remedy for spiritual languor, for decaying love, for a querulous conscience, for uncomfortable frames of mind.

Further, if all were rightly cultivated, we should soon find other gifts lying dormant among us, from which multiplied

and extended benefits might be derived. From various quarters applications begin to come to us for teachers, ministers, missionaries. How well would it be if, as the result of our present position, we could send forth an army of soldiers of the cross ; other interests being set aside for this, and the salvation of mankind taking precedence of our more immediate projects ! It is by strengthening the root that we infuse vigour into the branches ; by filling the bowl with oil that our lamp scatters wide its effulgence. These good fruits, it is true, do not depend on any power or good-will of ours, who have nothing but what we receive ; yet does not the providence of God urge on us at this time His admonition, " Prove me now, and I will pour out a blessing so large that there shall not be room to receive it," and warn us of the regret that may attend lost opportunities : " O that Israel had hearkened unto me ! then had his peace been like the river, and his righteousness like the waves of the sea."

It is predicted by some, on, we presume, a worldly estimate, that our Free Church will sink gradually into insignificance ; that the *eclat* attending the first movement and those who took the lead in it dying away, it will not maintain, in the persons of their successors, the importance that now belongs to it—that, in the natural course of things, men well-connected in society, with means of advancing themselves in life, will shrink from its poverty and humble prospects ; while, on the other hand, the security that is held out among us against absolute want, though small, will have attractions for men of humbler station, not recommended by the talents that equalise other things, and cover all defects of early cultivation. I have found some of our ingenuous

youth discouraged on this score—willing in their own case to sacrifice advantages, but averse to vulgar association, or losing their position among their equals in society. It must be our aim, with God's help, to neutralise these objections by the incontestible purity and disinterestedness of our principles, the high mark we set before us, the dignity that flows from an elevated tone of thinking, solid learning, and gentlemanly, unoffending manners; by mildness in dispute, candour and liberality toward those who differ from us, united with innocence, simplicity, a generously self-denied and beneficent course of life. If we utterly disclaim the affectation of the Jesuits, who take cognisance of looks and attitudes; who instruct their pupils to abase the eyes, to guard against contraction of the forehead, to wear, at least exteriorly, the marks of the meekness and lowliness, the courteousness and placidity, that indicate subjugation of the passions, with peace and purity within; let us seek by all means to have the real, unsimulated grace from which such commendatory tokens naturally flow. "The meek are beautified with salvation;" and we have heard it remarked, among the lesser evidences of satisfaction felt by our ministers in the course they have taken, that their *looks* indicate hope and happiness—no discontent, disappointment, or despondency appearing among them. Let us cultivate with diligence the inward principle, that we may not fall behind others in the signs by which it is expressed. We shall not I trust be led to lower, though we may vary and enlarge our education and requirements for the ministry.

Allow me one word more, which I would address chiefly to my younger brethren in the ministry. You are warned,

my friends, against a vague, uncertain creed, and feel it of first importance to have a clear apprehension of Scripture truth, and of the doctrines of revelation as they flow out from, and are sustained by one another. You are convinced also that your articles of belief are not to be held as mere opinions, *dogmata* of the understanding, but as truths experimentally known and studied out for yourselves, in the interesting search to which you were led in the matter of personal religion. But, with this firmness and tenacity as to essentials, let us be on our guard against extending our formula, or drawing our line too strictly in secondary things, so as to exclude or alienate either communities or individuals who hold the truth as effectively as we, though with variety of external arrangement. Those who rejoice in the truth, delight in its products and insignia wherever they are found. They seize on points of agreement, salient and easily discovered, determining that those who are not against are on their side, and combining their forces, urge onward the cause that absorbs their entire devotion. They deprecate time spent in the appraisalment of mint and cummin, will not give the hours appointed for labour to scholastic niceties, or waste the resources given for the furtherance of their Master's cause, in vain speculation or perverse disputings.

The preacher wise to win souls, does not come forward to vindicate his own orthodoxy, to display or exercise his skill in subtle distinctions or points of acknowledged difficulty. He does not aim at bringing his auditory to an exact uniformity of opinion on those more abstruse and recondite subjects which do not necessarily claim a place in the Christian's creed, and which the multitude of sincere believers may

safely leave unanalysed. He does not address his people as disputants and opponents, who are there to resist his doctrine, but as learners in Christ's school, saved by the same grace and amenable to the same authority with himself. He must carry their sympathies along with him; and free from all bondage to suspected criticism, uses his Bible-like liberty of *enforcing human obligation*, without thought of the *Arminians*, and of *upholding God's sovereignty* in the dispensation of grace, without reference to the *Calvinists*.

There is *variety* in all the works of God; and some *scope* in the way of stating truths, according with the training and personal experience of individuals in the school of Christ, adapts them for the different classes of hearers of the gospel. Men have also different degrees of knowledge, though sincere and faithful. We are all but learners, and come to feel the force of some truths at one time, of which we had an imperfect impression at another. It is proper no doubt, for those who are teachers in the Church to be first students of the truth, and well instructed in the different parts of their theology; but I own I have more satisfaction in a man who is feeling his way in some points, taught by the Spirit, and professing no more than he has ascertained from that source, than in one who is strong in asserting and maintaining all orthodox opinions, as swallowed in the lump, and given out chiefly as oracular dogmas of the understanding, without regard to the effect upon others. Nothing is more painful than to hear ignorant men of any class presuming themselves to be of a privileged order, talking as if they were God's privy councillors, "wise above what is written," and occupied more with the unknown, the unrevealed, or even the incom-

prehensible, than with those things that are given for our instruction, and to make us guides of the blind. If one having had concern for his soul, tells me that his heart is now "sprinkled from an evil conscience," and that he has "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," I have a fellow-feeling with him; he speaks as God's children are wont to speak. But if a man takes his stand on God's eternal, unchangeable decrees, and tells us that his sins, past, present, and to come, were pardoned before they were committed and before he was born, I cannot help the suspicion that his faith may be a mere presumption, and that he wants instruction in the first elements of saving truth. Extremes on all hands are dangerous; and for nothing more to be shunned than for the reaction which it is their nature to produce. By pushing what is commonly called the *Calvinistic* doctrine, the acknowledged tenets of our Church, too far, *Calvino calvinior*, we not only disturb the harmony of the Scripture system, but make way probably for a rebound of opinion to the Pelagian and Arminian errors, against which we are anxious to guard. Our standards, formed at a late period, and with cognisance of all the heresies and controversies of which the Word of God has been made the occasion, are sufficiently decided and explicit. We would not have them more stringent or exact. With such form of words for our directory, and care that we admit only honest and well-instructed men into the ministry, we may hold that we have a sufficient guarantee for the doctrine taught among us, and should be slow to interfere with any man's work carrying with it evidence of the Divine blessing. Our Church ought to bring out young men that are "strong, having the word of God abiding in

them, who have overcome the wicked one;" fit for carrying the word before rulers and kings, if it were so appointed; but we must watch also that we do not fall short of our apostle's universal characteristic, that we be little children, "taught of God to love one another." We must guard this as a most necessary principle, and pour out our hearts in continual prayer that we be perfected in it, maintaining "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It were better for us to be scattered by persecution, or any other event in providence, to the ends of the earth, than that such evils should befall us as confusion, division, and party strife, in the scene where God has blessed us with the peculiar manifestations of His favour. May this evil be far, far from us!

Beloved fathers and brethren, if the duty or privilege of office has led me to trespass too much in addressing the word of exhortation to many here, from whom it would have far better become me to receive it, I trust I have your indulgence. The time is important. May God's blessing render it a word in season, stirring us up, severally and together, to "look to ourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

THE END.







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